

THOMAS BOSTON

AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIAN RELIGION

With Respect to Faith and Practice
Upon the Plan of the Assembly's
Shorter Catechism Comprehending
a Complete Body of Divinity

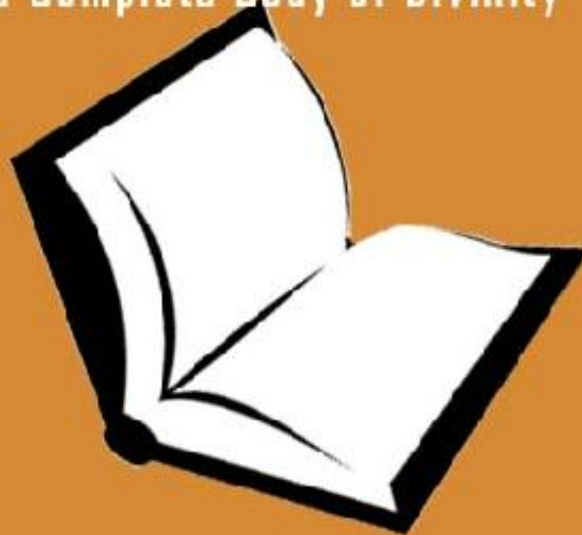


MONERGISM

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An Illustration of the Doctrines of Christian Religion

With Respect to Faith and Practice Upon the Plan of the
Assembly's Shorter Catechism Comprehending a Complete Body of
Divinity

by Thomas Boston

Hold fast the form of sound words.—2 TIM. 1:13

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OF MAN'S CHIEF END AND HAPPINESS

1 COR. 10:31.—Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

PSALM 73:25, 26.—Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

KNOWLEDGE is a necessary foundation of faith and holiness; and where ignorance reigns in the mind, there is confusion in the heart and life. We have the word of truth in our hands, and many

methodical systems of divine truths, amongst which the Shorter Catechism, composed by the Reverend Assembly of Divines at Westminster, in pursuance of the solemn league and covenant, as a part of the then intended uniformity between the three nations, is deservedly reckoned the chief. This I shall endeavour to explain with all possible brevity and perspicuity, that ye may have a view of those divine truths, with the reasons of them. And this I have thought it the more necessary to do, in order that your minds may be established in the truth, as our time is like to be a time of trial, wherein ye may be exposed to many snares, and so be in danger of apostasy.

In the first of the texts which I have read, ye have,

1. The chief end of human actions, the glory of God: that is the scope of which all we think, or speak, or do, should tend; this is the point or common centre, in which all should meet.
2. The extent of it. It is not only some of our actions, but all of them, of what kind soever, that must be directed to this end. This, then, is man's chief duty.

In the second text we have,

1. The Psalmist's chief desire, and what he points at as his only true happiness; that is, the enjoyment of God. He takes God for and instead of all, that in him alone his soul may rest.
2. The reason of this is taken from, (1.) The creature's emptiness, both in body and spirit, ver. 25. (2.) From God's fulness and sufficiency: and this is amplified by the eternity of it, my portion for ever.

From both texts the following doctrine natively follows. DOCT.
"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever."

In handling this doctrine, I shall speak, I. to the glorifying of God, which is one part of man's chief end.

II. To the enjoyment of God for ever, wherein man's chief happiness consists, and which he is to seek as his chief good.

I. I shall speak to the glorifying of God, which is one part of man's chief end. And here I shall shew,

1. The nature of glorifying God.
2. In what respects God's glory is man's chief end.
3. The extent of this glorifying God.
4. The reason of it.

First, I shall shew the nature of glorifying God. To glorify, is either to make glorious, or to declare to be glorious. God glorifies, i. e. makes angels or men glorious; but man cannot make God glorious, for he is not capable of any additional glory, being in himself infinitely glorious, Job 35:7. Hence it is plain, that God gets no advantage to himself by the best works of men, the profit of our holiness redounding entirely to ourselves, Acts 17:25. Psal. 16:2.

God is glorified, then, only declaratively; he is glorified when his glory is declared. This is done two ways. Objectively, by the creatures inanimate and irrational. Thus the heavens declare the glory of God, Psal. 19:1. This the creatures do, while they afford matter of praise to God, as a violin is fit to make music, though there must be a hand to play on it ere it can sound. Man declares his glory also actively. And this he ought to do,

1. By his heart, 1 Cor. 6:20. Glorify God in your spirit. Honouring God with the lips, not with the heart, is but a very lame and unacceptable performance. He ought to be glorified by our understanding, taking him up in the glory which the scripture reveals him in, thinking highly of him, and esteeming him above all other persons or things, Psal. 73:25. So they that know him not, can never glorify him: and they that esteem any person or thing more than, or

as much as him, dishonour him. We glorify him by our wills, chusing him as our portion and chief good, as he really is in himself; by our affections loving him, and rejoicing and delighting in him above every other.

2. By his lips, Psal. 50:23. 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.' Therefore man's tongue is called his glory, Psal. 16:9 not only because it serves him for speech, which exalts him above the brutes, but because it is given him as a proper instrument for speaking forth the glory of God. So that it must needs be a strange perverting of the tongue, to set it against the heavens, and let it loose to the dishonour of God, and fetter it as to his glory.

3. By his life, Mat. 5:16. 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' A holy life is a life of light; it is a shining light, to let a blind world see the glory of God. Sin darkens the glory of God, draws a veil over it. David's sin made the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. The study of holiness says, God is holy; mourning for every slip says, God is spotless; walking holily in all manner of conversation, within and without, &c. says, God is omniscient and omnipresent, &c. As when men find a well-ordered family, that tells what a man the master of it is.

SECONDLY, I proceed to show in what respects God's glory is man's chief end.

First, It is man's end,

1. It is the end which God aimed at when he made man, Prov. 16:4. 'The Lord hath made all things for himself,' Rom. 11:36. 'For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.' Every rational agent proposes to himself an end in working, and the most perfect the highest end. Now God is the most perfect Being, and his glory the noblest end. God is not actively glorified by all men, and therefore he surely did not design it; but he designed to have glory from them,

either by them or on them; and so it will be. Happy they who glorify him by their actings, that they may not glorify him by their eternal sufferings.

2. It is the end of man as God's work. Man was made fit for glorifying God, Eccl. 7:29. 'God made man upright;' as a well-tuned instrument, or as a house conveniently built, though never inhabited. The very fabric of a man's body, whereby he looks upward, while the beasts look down, is a palpable evidence of this.

3. It is that which man should aim at, the mark to which he should direct all he does, 1 Cor. 10:31, the text. This is what we should continually have in our eye, the grand design we should be carrying on in the world, Psal. 16:8. 'I have set the Lord always before me,' says David.

Secondly, It is man's chief end, that which God chiefly aimed at, the chief end of man as God's work, and that which man should chiefly aim at. God made man for other ends, as to govern, use, and dispose of other creatures in the earth, sea, and air, wisely, soberly, and mercifully, Gen. 1:26. Man was fitted for these ends, and a man may propose them lawfully to himself, seeing God has set them before him; but still these are but subordinate ends to his glory.

There are some ends which men propose to themselves, which are simply unlawful, as to satisfy their revenge, their lust, their covetousness, &c. These are not capable of subordination to the glory of God, who hates robbery for burnt-offering. But there are other ends, which are indeed in themselves lawful, yet become sinful, if they be not set in their due place, that is, subordinate to the glory of God. Now, God's glory is made our chief end, when these three things concur.

1. When whatever end we have in our actions, the glory of God is still one of our ends in acting. We may eat and drink for the nourishment of our bodies; but this must not jumble out our respect to the glory of

God. If the nourishment of our bodies be the only end of our eating and drinking, it is sinful, and out of the due order.

2. It must not only be our end, but it must be our main and principal end, that which we chiefly design. When God's glory is our chief end, all other ends that we propose to ourselves will be down-weighed by this; all other sheaves must bow to that sheaf: as a diligent servant designs to please both the master and his steward, but chiefly the master. But when, on the contrary, a man eats and drinks (for instance) more for the nourishment of his body than for God's glory, it is plain, that God's glory is not the chief end of the man in that action. Hence we read, 2 Tim. 3:4 of some that are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.'

3. When it is the ultimate end, the last end, the top and perfection of what we design, beyond which we have no more view, and to which all other ends are made subservient, and as means to that end. Thus we should eat that our bodies may be refreshed; we should desire that our bodies may be refreshed, that we may be the more capable to serve and glorify God in our stations. Thus we are obliged to seek our own salvation, that God may be glorified; and not to seek God's glory only that we may be saved; for that is to make the glory of God a stepping-stone to our own safety.

Thirdly, I come now to show the extent of this duty. Respect to the glory of God is as salt that must be served up with every dish. The great work of our life is to glorify him; it is the end of our first and of our second creation, Isa. 43:21. 'This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.' We must be for God, Hos. 3:3 and live to him. This must be the end.

1. Of our natural actions, 1 Cor. 10:31 eating, sleeping, walking, &c. we are under a law as to these things. We may not eat and drink as we please, more than pray as we please, Zech. 7:6. All these things must be done in subserviency to the glory of God. These things must be done that we may live, and living may glorify God; and when we

can do it without them in heaven, then none of these things shall be done.

2. Of our civil actions, working our work, buying and selling, &c. Eph. 6:7. Prov. 21:4. It was one of the sins of the old world, that they were eating; the word is properly used of beasts eating their food: they had no higher end in it than beasts; and marrying, a thing in itself lawful, but they had no eye to God in it.

3. Of our moral and religious actions, Zech. 7:5. We must pray, hear, &c. for God's glory.

This is such a necessary ingredient in our actions, that none of them are truly good and acceptable to God without it, Zech. 7:5. Do what we will, it cannot be service to God, if we do not make him our end; no more than a servant's working to himself is service to his master. God will never be the rewarder of a work, whereof he is not the end; for if a man should build houses to all the country, if he build not one to me, I owe him nothing. Alas! to what purpose serves a generation of good works all killed by a depraved end?

Though it is a duty frequently to have a formal and express intention of the glory of God in our actings, yet to have it in every action is impossible: neither are we bound to it; for then, for that very intention we should be obliged to have another, another for that, and another for that, in infinitum. But we should always habitually and interpretatively design the glory of God. And that is done when, (1.) The course of our lives is directed to the glory of God, Psal. 50 ult. (2.) When we walk according to the rule of God's word, taking heed that we swerve not in any thing from it. And, (3.) When God's will is the reason as well as the rule of our actions; when we believe a truth, because God has said it; and do a duty, because God has commanded it. If we do not so, God loses his glory, and we lose our labour.

Fourthly, The reason of the point is, because he is the first principle, therefore he must be the last end. He is the first and the last, the

Alpha, and therefore the Omega. God is the fountain of our being; and therefore seeing we are of him, we should be to him, Rom. 11 ult. forecited. Man is a mere relative being; God is our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor. Our being is but a borrowed being from him, as the rays or beams of the sun are borrowed from the sun: therefore I AM is God's name. Whatever perfection we have is from him; hence he is called 'the only wise, none good but one, that is God:' he gives us the continuance of all these things, and it is on his cost that we live. As when the waters come from the sea unto the earth, and go back again unto it by brooks and rivers; so all we receive and enjoy comes from God, and ought to go back again to him, by being used for his glory. Wherefore to make ourselves our chief end, is to make ourselves a god to ourselves; for a creature to be a centre to itself, and that God should be a means to that end, is to blaspheme, John 8:50.

II. I shall speak to the enjoyment of God for ever, wherein man's chief happiness consists, and which he is to seek as his chief good. Here I shall show,

1. The nature of this enjoyment.
2. The order of it.
3. That it is man's chief end in point of happiness.

FIRST, I shall shew the nature of this enjoyment. There is a twofold enjoyment of God, imperfect and perfect.

First, There is an imperfect enjoyment of God in this life; which consists in two things.

1. In union with him, or a special saving interest in him, whereby God is their God by covenant. By this union Christ and believers are so joined, that they are one spirit, one mystical body. The whole man, soul and body, is united to him, and, through the Mediator, unto God. This is the foundation of all saving enjoyment of God.

2. In communion with God, which is a participation of the benefits of that saving relation, whereof the soul makes returns to the Lord in the exercise of its graces, particularly of faith and love. This is had in the duties of religion, prayer, meditation, &c. in which the Lord privileges his people with manifestations of his grace, favour, and love, bestows on them the influences of his Spirit, gives them many tokens of his kindness, and fills them with joy and peace in believing.

Secondly, There is a perfect enjoyment of God in heaven, when this world is no more. This consists in,

1. An intimate presence with him in glory Psal. 16:11, 'In his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore.' God himself shall be with them, and they shall ever be with the Lord, enjoying his glorious presence, brought near to his throne, and standing before him, where he shews his inconceivable glory.

2. In seeing him as he is, 1 John 3:2. They shall have a full, a satisfying, and never-ending sight of God, and of all his glorious perfections and excellencies, and they shall be ravished with the view thereof for ever.

3. In a perfect union with him, Rev. 21:3. He will be their God. They were united to God in Christ here by the Spirit and faith, and made partakers of a divine nature, but then only in part; but in heaven they shall perfectly partake of it. There shall be a most close and intimate union between God and them: God shall be in them, and they in God, in the way of a glorious and most perfect union, never to be dissolved.

4. In an immediate, full, free, and comfortable communion with him, infinitely superior to all the communion they ever had with him in this world, and which no mortal can suitably describe.

5. Lastly, In full joy and satisfaction resulting from these things for ever, Mat. 25:21. The presence and enjoyment of God and the Lamb,

shall satisfy them with pleasures for evermore. They shall swim for ever in an ocean of joy, and every object they see shall fill them with the most ecstatic joy, which shall be ever fresh and new to them, through all the ages of eternity.*

Secondly, Let us consider the order of this enjoyment.

1. It is a part of man's chief end, and, in conjunction with glorifying of God, makes it up. And these two are put together, because no man can glorify God, but he that takes God for his chief good and supreme happiness.

2. Glorifying of God is put before the enjoying of him, because the way of duty is the way to the enjoyment of God. Holiness on earth must necessarily go before felicity in heaven, Heb. 12:14. There is an inseparable connexion betwixt the two, as between the end and the means; so that no person who does not glorify God here, shall ever enjoy him hereafter. The connexion is instituted by God himself, so that the one can never be attained without the other. Let no person, then, who has no regard for the glory and honour of God in this world, dream that he shall be crowned with glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, in the heavenly mansions. No; the pure in heart, and they who glorify God now, shall alone see God, to their infinite joy in heaven.

THIRDLY, I shall shew, that the enjoyment of God is man's chief end in point, of happiness, the thing that he should chiefly seek. For this end,

1. Consider what man is. He is, (1.) A creature that desires happiness, and cannot but desire it. The desire of happiness is woven into his nature, and cannot be eradicated. It is as natural for him to desire it as it is to breathe. (2.) He is not self-sufficient: he is conscious to himself that he wants many things, and therefore he is ever seeking something without himself in order to be happy. (3.) Nothing but an infinite good can fully satisfy the desires of an immortal soul:

because, whatever good he finds in the creature, he can still desire more, and will continue to desire it; and where it is not to be found, there his happiness is marred. So that man's happiness is neither to be found in himself nor in any creature, or created good.

2. Consider what God is.

1st, God is the chief good. Some persons, as angels, &c. and some things, as grace, glory, &c. are good; but God is the chief good, for he is the fountain good, and the water that is good is always best in the fountain. All other goodness is but second-hand goodness, derived and dependant; but God is original, underived, and independent goodness, the cause and source of whatever is good in heaven and earth. Now, where the more goodness is, there the more it is to be sought. And therefore, seeing God is the chief good, the enjoyment of him is the chief end which man should aim at in seeking.

2dly, God is all good. (1.) There is nothing in him but what is good; he is entirely without imperfection. (2.) All that is good is in him; so that the soul, finding him commensurate to its desires, needs nothing besides him; and therefore should not, and cannot, fully rest in any person or thing but God, who alone is able to satisfy all its desires, and afford it that happiness which it earnestly pants after.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. O how does reigning sin pervert the spirit of man, turning it quite away from its chief end! How many are there who make themselves their chief end! They are conjured within the circle of self, and out of it they cannot move. Like beasts they grovel on the ground, seeking themselves, and acting for themselves only or chiefly, pursuing the enjoyment of earthly things; but look not to God, Phil. 3:19. Their own advantage is the chief motive and aim they have in their natural, civil, and religious actions, either their own pleasure, profit, or honour and glory. And they never think of, never propose the glory and honour of the infinite Majesty of heaven in any thing they do.

2. This may fill the best with shame and blushing. O how much is God dishonoured by our hearts, lips, and lives! O what self-seeking mixes itself with our best actions! How eagerly do we pursue created things, and how faintly the enjoyment of God! How absurd is such conduct! and how dishonourable to a holy God! It is a saying upon the matter, that God is not the chief good, that he is not a suitable portion for the soul, and that the creature is better than God. How should we be ashamed of ourselves on this account, and labour earnestly to make God the chief and ultimate end of all our actions, and the enjoyment of him our chief happiness!

3. Behold the excellency of man above other creatures on earth! He is made for a noble end, to glorify and enjoy God, while other creatures were made for him. How sad is it, that men should thus forget their dignity, and turn slaves to those creatures which were made to serve them! And how deplorable and lamentable is it, that men, in place of making God their ultimate end, and placing their chief happiness in him, should make their belly, their lusts and idols, their God, and place their chief felicity in the gratification of sensual and brutish pleasures; as the drunkard does in his bottle, the unclean person in his whore, the miser in his wealth, and the ambitious man in titles of honour. Alas! our hearts by nature are set on the earth that we tread upon, and our desires reach up to those things that we should make stepping-stones of. Let us earnestly implore divine grace to cure this disorder of our hearts, and give them a bias to more excellent things, and the enjoyment of that which will survive the grave, and not perish with the wrecks of time, and the dissolution of the world.

4. The soul of man is immortal, seeing to enjoy God for ever is its ultimate and supreme happiness. God is immortal, and so must the soul be too, which can never be satisfied but in this never-dying being. The body too must rise again, seeing God is the God and portion of the whole man. Now, God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Can that thinking and immaterial substance which eagerly desires happiness, and can find it no where but in the immortal God, perish with the body, and all its thoughts and desires

be extinguished in the grave? No; its chief happiness will subsist for ever, and so will the soul too. And both soul and body, which were united to God here, shall continue to be united to him for ever, after the resurrection. Let us then seek to be united to God here, that we may be happy with and in him for ever.

5. When God and the creature come in competition, we must renounce the creature, and cleave to God only, Luke 14:33. God is the chief good, and to glorify and adhere to him at all times, and in all cases, and amidst all trials, is our great duty, a duty absolutely required of us. If we are reduced to that dilemma, that we must either give up with the creature, or any worldly goods or possessions, or even life itself, or give up with and deny God and his cause, we must give up with and abandon the former, and not prefer them to the glory of God, which we ought always to study as our main end, and account our chief happiness and joy.

6. Here is a rule to try doctrines by, and also practices. Whatever doctrine tends to glorify God, and promote his honour in the world, is certainly from God, and is to be embraced. And whatever practices have that same tendency, they are good, and deserve to be imitated. Whereas any doctrine that tends to dishonour God, to rob him of his glory, and set the crown upon the creature's head, to depreciate the free grace of God, exalt the power of nature and of free-will, in opposition to the efficacious and irresistible grace of God, as the doctrines of the Pelagians, Papists, Arminians, and others do, is not from God. Neither is any doctrine or opinion that robs the Son of God of his essential dignity, supremacy, independency, and equality with the Father, to be received, because it is not of God, who will have all men to honour the Son even as they honour the Father.

Lastly, Let this then be your main and chief work, to glorify God, and to seek to enjoy him. And hence see the absolute need of Christ, and faith in him; for there is no glorifying of the Father without the Son, 1 John 2:23 and no enjoying of God, but through him. No sacrifice is

or can be accepted, unless offered upon this altar; and there is no coming into the chamber of presence, but as introduced by Christ.

THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

2 TIM. 3:16.—All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

THE next head which falls to be touched is the holy scripture, the rule which God has given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him. We are poor blind creatures, that know not our way, neither how we should glorify God, nor how we may come to the enjoyment of him. Therefore God hath given us the revelation of his mind in that great point. The connexion betwixt this and the preceding question is abundantly obvious; the one points out the end for which we were made, the other the rule to direct us how to attain to that end. And in this text we have two things.

1. The divine authority of the scriptures asserted. All scripture is given by inspiration of God. The word scripture signifies writing in general; but here it is appropriated to the holy scripture. It principally here aims at the scriptures of the Old Testament, which were written by men of a prophetic spirit: but seeing the New Testament was written by such as were endowed with the same Spirit for writing, upon that reason, what is applied to the Old belongs also to the New Testament. It is said to be of divine inspiration, because the writers were inspired by the Spirit, who guided their hearts and pens; he dictated, and they wrote; so that it is his word and not theirs; and that is extended to the whole scriptures.

2. The use and end of the scriptures: It is profitable for doctrine, &c. If ye desire to know the truths of religion, or what we believe, the scripture is profitable for doctrine, teaching us what we are to believe concerning God, Christ, and ourselves, and the great things that concern salvation. If ye want to refute the contrary errors, it is profitable for reproof, to convince us of the nature and importance of divine truth and point out what errors we are to avoid. If ye desire, to amend your life and practice, casting off sinful practices, it is profitable for correction, that is, for reformation of manners. If ye want to know what is duty, and what is sin, it is necessary for instruction and righteousness; shewing us how to lead a holy and righteous life before God, and instructing us in the true righteousness, which is the foundation of our access to God, and acceptance with him, the righteousness of Christ. And what more is necessary for salvation, for faith and obedience, for the whole of salvation?

Two doctrines offer themselves from the words, viz.

DOCT. I. 'The scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God.'

DOCT. II. 'The scriptures are the rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God.'

I shall prosecute each doctrine in order.

DOCT. I. 'The scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God.'

Here I shall shew,

I. What is meant by the Old and New Testament.

II. What are the scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

III. The necessity of the scriptures.

IV. That the scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God.

V. Deduce some inferences.

I. I shall shew what is meant by the Old and New Testament. It is the covenant of grace which is called a testament, and it is properly a testamentary covenant, without any proper conditions as to us, Heb. 8:10. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Christ is the testator; he made the testament, and confirmed it with his death. The spirit of Christ drew the testament, dictating it to the holy penman. This testament of Christ's is one and the same as to substance, though sometimes more clearly revealed than at other times. The Old Testament is the more obscure draught of Christ's will, and the New Testament is the more clear one. Thus they only differ in circumstances, while the substantiate of both are one and the same; one Mediator and testator, one legacy or promise of remission of sin and eternal life, and one faith as the way of obtaining it*.

II. I proceed to shew what are the scriptures of the Old and New Testament. The scriptures of the Old Testament are those which begin with Genesis, and end with Malachi; and the scriptures of the New Testament are those which begin with Matthew, and end with the Revelation. And it is worthy of our special remark, how the Old Testament and the New, like the cherubims in the most holy place, stretch forth their wings touching one another; the Old Testament ending with the prophecy of sending Christ and John the Baptist Mal. 4 and the New beginning with the history of the coming of these two.

The books of the Old Testament were divided by the Hebrews into three, the law, the Prophets, and Ketubim, written books. The law contains the five books of Moses, the Prophets are twofold, former

and latter. The former are the historical books of the Old Testament, as Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings; and they were so called, because they told things already done. The latter related things before they were done; and are of two sorts; the greater, which are three, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; the lesser twelve, viz. Hosea, Joel, &c. The written books were called so, because they were written by such as had the gift of the Holy Spirit, as the Hebrews speak, but not of prophecy. And of that sort are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Daniel. The Hebrews ascribe this division of them to Ezra; and it seems our Lord Jesus Christ acknowledged the same, while he tells his disciples, Luke 24:44 of the writings of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.

The books of the New Testament are divided into three sorts, Histories, the Four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Revelation, which is prophetic.

The books of both the Testaments were written by different authors. As to the Old Testament, Moses wrote the Pentateuch; only some verses in the end of Deuteronomy, where Moses' death is recorded, could not be written by him, but are said to have been written by Joshua; who also wrote the book that bears his name; or, according to the opinion of some, it was written by Eleazar, Aaron's son. Samuel is supposed to have written the book of Judges, and, it would appear, the last part of the book of Joshua, containing the account of the death of Joshua and Eleazar: Some think that the Judges did write every one the history of their own time; and that Samuel at last did put them all into one volume. The book of Ruth also was written by him, as the Hebrews tell. He wrote also the first book bearing his name, to the 25th chapter, where his death is narrated. The rest of the chapters of that book, and the whole of the second book, are said to have been written by David. The books of the Kings are supposed to be written by David and Solomon, and other prophets that lived in these times; so that each of them did write what was done in his own time. Job is supposed to have written the book that bears his name.

David wrote the Psalms, but not all: such as are not his have the author's name prefixed; as Asaph, Heman, &c.: and they were all by Ezra collected into one volume. Ezra is said to have written the books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah; Mordecai, that of Esther; and Solomon, the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets, wrote every one their own prophecies, containing a short sum of their sermons.

As for the books of the New Testament, without controversy the evangelists wrote the Gospels, according as their names are prefixed to them. Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles; and the remaining books, the Epistles and the Revelation, were written by those whose names they bear. Only, as to the Epistle to the Hebrews, there has been some doubt, some ascribing it to Luke, some to Barnabas, others to Apollos, and others to Clemens: but many learned men have given good reasons to prove it to be written by the apostle Paul.

But the principal author is the Holy Spirit, whence the scripture is called the Word of God. The penmen were but the instruments in the hand of God in writing the same. It was the Spirit that dictated them, that inspired the writers, and guided them. But the inspiration was not the same in all points to all the penmen; for some things were before utterly unknown to the writer, as the history of the creation of the world to Moses; the prediction of future events in respect of the prophets; which therefore the Spirit did immediately reveal to them: Other things were known to the writers before, as the history of Christ to the four evangelists, &c.; in respect of these there need no new revelation, but a divine irradiation of the mind of the writer, giving him a divine certainty of those things which he wrote. By this inspiration all of them were infallibly guided, so as they were put beyond all possibility of erring. And this inspiration was extended not only to the things themselves expressed, but to the words wherein they were expressed, though agreeable to the natural style and manner of each writer, 2 Pet. 1:21; Psal. 45:1. Upon this account the scripture is attributed to the Holy Spirit, without making any mention of the penmen, Heb. 10:15.

Quest. But what opinion are we to form of the books called Apocrypha, And why are they so called?

Answ. These books, which are found placed in some bibles betwixt Malachi and Matthew are called Apocrypha, which is a Greek word, signifying hidden or absconded. The reasons of this name are given thus (1.) Because they were not acknowledged by the church to be of divine inspiration. (2.) Because the names of the authors were hid. (3.) Because they contain some things unknown to Moses, the prophets and apostles. (4.) Because, for the foresaid reasons, they were judged unworthy to be publicly read in the church. Concerning these books, we believe that they are not of divine inspiration, and therefore no part of the canon of scripture; that is, they are not to be admitted as any part of the rule of faith and manners: and therefore they are of no authority in the church of God for the determining of controversies in religion; and so, though they may be of use as other human writings, yet they are no otherwise to be made use of nor approved. The reasons are,

1. They were not acknowledged by the church of the Jews for canonical: to whom the Apostle tells us, Rom. 3:2. 'the oracles of God,' under the Old Testament dispensation 'were committed.' They even forbade their children to read them till they came to mature age.

2. They were not written in the Hebrew tongue, but in the Greek; and the authors of them were posterior to Malachi, who was the last of the prophets, according to the saying of the Hebrews, that the Holy Ghost went up from Israel after the death of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. And 1 Mac. 4:46 plainly shews, that there was no prophet among them, to shew them what they should do with the stones of the polluted altar. And it may clearly appear to any unbiassed person, how the interposing of these books betwixt Malachi and Matthew does cut off the beautiful connexion betwixt the end of the Old and the beginning of the New Testament, and how Malachi's prophecy is designed of God to close up the scriptures of the Old

Testament, in that he prophecies most distinctly of the coming of Christ, and John the Baptist his forerunner, with the accomplishment of which Matthew begins his gospel, as I observed before.

3. The primitive church for the first four centuries received not these books; and when they came to be read, the reader stood but in an inferior place, they being then read as profitable books, though not of divine authority.

4. They are no where cited by Christ and his apostles. Yea, they are not obscurely rejected by him, while he divides the scriptures into Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, Luke 24:44. And whereas the Apostle tells us, that 'prophecy came not of old by the will of man, but that holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' 2 Pet. 1:21 the authors of these books pretend to no such thing. The author of Ecclesiasticus in the prologue intreats the reader to pardon them, (viz. him and his grandfather), wherein they may seem to come short of some words which they have laboured to interpret. Such an apology is there, 2 Mac. 15:38. 'If I have done well, it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto.' 2 Mac. 2:23 the author tells us, he will essay to abridge in one volume the five books of Jason of Cyrene. Ver. 26 he tells how he hath taken on him the painful labour of abridging; that it was a matter of sweat and watching to him: And ver. 27. 'But for the pleasuring of many,' says he, 'we will undertake this great pains.' And more of this stuff has he there; which plainly speaks forth nothing else than human learning and pains, which men desire to have much accounted of amongst others.

Lastly, They neither agree with themselves nor the holy scriptures, as may plainly appear to those who will consider them diligently. 1 Mac. 6:16 compared with ver. 4 it is said, that Antiochus died at Babylon. Yet 2 Mac. 1:13, 14, 15, 16 it is said, that when he was come into Persia, he was slain in the temple of Nanea, whom he pretended that he would marry, and would receive money in name of dowry, by her

priests. Yea, 2 Mac. 9:28 he is said to have died in a strange country in the mountains. The book of Tobit is stuffed with absurd stories; it makes the angel Raphael to tell a lie, and to teach Tobit's son a devilish art, to drive away the devil with the heart and liver of a fish; and when the evil spirit smelled the smell, he fled into the utmost parts of Egypt, &c. The author of the history of the Maccabees commends Rasis for self-murder, and prayer for the dead, 2 Mac. 12:44, 45. These things plainly shew, that these books are not from the Spirit of God.

All this shews the darkness of Popery that receives these books as canonical, and the dregs remaining in the church of England, who, though they do not receive them for canonical, yet mix the reading of portions of them in their churches with the scriptures, while in the mean time, several portions of the holy scripture are passed over, and not read publicly in their service. And whilst we blame the church of England for reading in her service books that are not canonical, impartiality obliges us to say, that far too small a portion of the books that are canonical is read in the public service of our own church. This is equally culpable.

And as there is none of these to be admitted into the canon, so neither can we gratify the Papists with yielding, that there are any books of the scripture lost, lest we reflect on the providence of God, that to a miracle has preserved these books to this day, and has insured the preservation of far less parts than whole books, Mat. 5:18.

III. I proceed to shew the necessity of the scriptures.

1. There was a necessity of the revelation of the doctrine of the scriptures. For though the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable, Rom. 1:20 and 2:14, 15 yet they are not sufficient to shew us either how we should glorify, or how we may enjoy God, and so are not sufficient to give that knowledge of

God, and of his will, that is necessary to salvation. For (1.) There is no salvation out of Christ, Acts 4:12. 1 Cor. 3:11 there is no salvation through him but by faith, Mark 16:16. John 3:16 and 17:3 and there can be no faith nor knowledge of Christ but by revelation, Rom. 10:14–17. (2.). They who have only nature's light, and so do not enjoy divine revelation, are without God, and have no hope, Eph. 2:12.; and therefore there was a necessity for preaching the gospel, 1 Cor. 1:21. (3.) Whatever knowledge men may attain to of God by nature, yet saving illumination and conversion can only be got by the revealed will of God written in his word. See Psal. 19 throughout.

2. There is a necessity of the scriptures, or written word, though the Papists whose kingdom is supported by darkness, deny it. It is true, God did teach his church a long time before Moses without the written word; but then the same doctrine that we have in the scriptures, the patriarchs had by extraordinary revelation often repeated; and their long lives gave them opportunity to keep what was so revealed uncorrupted, and so to hand it down to others. But now both these are gone, and therefore the written word is necessary, (1.) For preserving the doctrine from corruption in such times of apostasy, 2 Pet. 3:1. (2.) For the better propagating of the truth, Matt. 28:19. The apostles could not with their voice teach all nations, but by their writings they could. (3.) If the written word were wanting, the church has nothing to look to but uncertain traditions; but the written word is a sure touchstone of doctrines, Isa. 8:20 a light in a dark place, 2 Pet. 1:19 both of which are most necessary.

3. There is a necessity of it not only for beginners, but for those who are more perfect. The scripture is written for all indifferently, Col. 3:16. Even the most perfect will find enough there, and more than they are able for: 'Open thou mine eyes,' says David, 'that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law,' Psal. 119:18. It is but the blindness of enthusiasts to pretend, that it is only for the weaker, and that the more perfect must follow the Spirit: for if that Spirit teach any thing contrary to the written word, it is a spirit of darkness, Isa.

8:20.; yea, if it teach another doctrine, an anathema is pronounced against it, Gal. 1:8.

Thus it plainly appears, that nothing short of scripture-revelation is sufficient to salvation, and that in an objective way; that is, that it is a sufficient rule to lead men to salvation. But something else is requisite to make this rule effectual for that end. No skill or wisdom of men representing them in the clearest point of view, nor all the power of the most elaborate and persuasive reasonings, can produce this effect. This work is the province of the Spirit of God, which he accomplishes by an internal illumination of the mind, giving blinded sinners a saving discovery of divine truths; by powerfully subduing man's obstinate will, and enabling it cheerfully and readily to obey the will of God and the authority of Christ; and by working upon our affections, exciting in us ardent desires after God and Christ, and a high esteem of divine truth, and removing the prejudices in our minds against it, and opening our hearts to receive the word, and comply with the design thereof.

IV. I shall next shew that the scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God. Christ is God's personal word, but the scriptures are his written word, Hos. 1:2.

The scriptures appear to be the word of God, if we consider,

1. The antiquity of some parts of them, which are more ancient than any human writings, and give us such an history as none but God himself could do, viz. the creation of the world; for how could men tell what was done before man had a being?
2. The preservation of it to this day, notwithstanding the malice of devils and wicked men against it. If it had not been of God, it could not have continued till now, considering the attempts that have been made to destroy it.
3. The candour and sincerity of the penmen of these sacred writings, who honestly declare what they delivered was received from God,

plainly tell their own faults as well as those of others, and every way write as men over-ruled by the Spirit of God.

4. The exact performance of scripture-prophecies. Isaiah prophesied that Cyrus should deliver the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, not only before that captivity took place, but more than an hundred years before that prince was born. Jeremiah, a little before that captivity, foretold it should last seventy years, and that was the precise duration of it. How remarkably have all the prophecies relating to the fall of the Babylonish, Persian, Grecian, and Roman monarchies been fulfilled! And what an exact accomplishment has there been of the several prophecies relating to the birth and death of Christ, and the spreading of his kingdom in the world! The scripture contains many other prophecies which time has shewn exactly performed, and many that are yet to be fulfilled.

5. The blood of many martyrs hath confirmed the divinity of this book, while they joyfully laid down their lives for the truth of it; in which it is evident they were carried up above what human power could do.

6. The scriptures have been confirmed by incontrovertible miracles. All miracles are wrought by God himself; and it is inconsistent with his holy nature to work miracles for confirming a lie or a cheat. Many miracles were wrought by Moses, by Christ, and by his apostles. If then these miracles were done by them, the doctrine they taught was true. Now, we have all rational grounds to suppose, that these miracles were really wrought. It is certain, that the general consent of those who have heard of them goes that way. Now, if it be supposed a cheat that such things were done, then that cheat took place either among those who were said to have seen them, and were witnesses to them or else among those who lived after that generation which is said to have seen them was dead and gone. But neither of these two can be said here. Not the first, for two reasons. (1.) Because these miracles were such things as men's outward senses (their eyes and ears) could be judges of. (2.) They are said to be done, not in a

corner, but in the face of the world. Therefore it was impossible that that generation could be imposed upon. If a man should say, that yesterday he divided the river Tweed in presence of us all, and brought us all through on dry land, it would be impossible for him to make us believe it, for we saw no such thing, nor waded so through that river. Or if he should say, that he came to the church-yard, and raised a dead man in our presence, whom we now see among us, he could never cause us believe it, nor cheat us into a persuasion of the same. Neither could any in after generations invent such a story, and impose the cheat upon others. (1.) Because there are some things done in memory of these miracles. (2.) Such observances did commence from the time that such things were done, as circumcision, the passover, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. If then the forger would impose it on others, he must make them believe, that these observances have been constantly in use since that time, which, if they were not, could not be believed, because it contradicts the senses: for it would be impossible to make a nation believe that they were all circumcised or baptized, when there was no such thing; and especially that such things were done to them in memory of such a thing as they never heard of.

7. The scriptures must either be from God, or the creature. They cannot be from the creature; for if so, they must be from angels or men. Neither of these can be said. Not the first; for then they should either be from good angels or evil angels. From good angels they cannot be, in regard, they say, they are the word of God, and this would be a most gross cheat which cannot be attributed to good angels; for angels imposing such a cheat on the world could no more be looked on as good, but as evil. With what shadow of reason can it be imagined, that good angels, remaining so, should abuse the name of God, as to speak in his name, what he never said? Evil angels it cannot be either, in regard the scripture doth natively tend to overturn the devil's kingdom; it pronounces their doom, discovers their malicious designs, brings men out of their service, and from doing what is pleasing to them. The same way may we reason concerning good or bad men their being the principal authors of the

scriptures. And you know what torment the scripture assigns to liars. It remains then that the scripture is of divine inspiration.

Besides, such things are found in the scripture themselves, as do plainly demonstrate they are the word of God. As,

1. The heavenliness of the matter of the scripture, shews it to be of a divine origin. Therefore they are called the holy scriptures, Rom. 1:2. See Psal. 12:6. Nothing carnal or earthly is delivered therein, but all is what becomes those who live above the world, and shall shine in glory. I take this heavenliness of the matter to respect two things. (1.) The sublime mysteries therein revealed, which nature ever so much elevated could never attain to the discovery of. Such is the doctrine of the Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, and the spiritual union betwixt Christ and believers. The light of nature improved by the learned to the utmost advantage, could not teach these things; yet a few fishermen plainly delivered them. (2.) The most exact holiness of its precepts, commanding all holiness, and forbidding all impurity of heart and life under the pain of damnation; and that so universally, as all the writings of philosophers have come far short of. Here we are taught to love our enemies, to be truly and thoroughly humble and self-denied; and this urged by such arguments as may be most effectual for inciting men to the practice of these duties. Sure this could neither be the work of men, being so opposite to corrupt nature, nor of devils being so opposite to their kingdom and interest, but of that God who is holy, and loveth righteousness.

2. The efficacy of the doctrine, in its convincing and searching the conscience, Heb. 4:12.; converting the soul from its most beloved lusts, even when nothing can be expected from the world for such a change but the cross, Psal. 19:7.; rejoicing the heart under the deepest distresses, ver. 8. This efficacy lies not in the bare words, letters, or syllables, which have no other power than to signify the things; but it is the ordinary means which the Spirit makes use of for these ends, without which it will be but a dead letter.

3. The majesty and sublimity of the style, an elevated and grand diction which runs through many passages of the scriptures, particularly in the books of Moses, some parts of the Psalms, in the book of Job, and the writings of the prophets. There are in several passages of the Old Testament such a loftiness of style, so grand an assemblage of bold images and representations, such a collection of noble and majestic sentiments, and so much magnificence and pomp of language, as cannot be found in any human writings whatever. There is something so truly majestic and sublime, so grand and magnificent in the style of the sacred writings, as has forced heathen philosophers to acknowledge it, and select passages therefrom as instances of the true sublime; as does Longinus with regard to the words of God, Let there be, and some other passages. At the same time let it be observed, that there is nothing affected, no flights of false eloquence, no exertions of a luxuriant genius, no laboured strokes of a warm imagination, no forced images, no distorted metaphors, no quaint allusions, or unnatural comparisons which are frequently found in the most admired productions of ancient and modern writers; but the utmost plainness and perspicuity, a noble simplicity, and an elegant familiarity, level to the capacity of the illiterate, reign throughout the sacred volume. So that its style must engage the attention and regard of the learned philosopher and poet, and delight the unlearned peasant. Thus God is frequently brought in speaking to and by the prophets, and his majesty set forth in a majestic style, as Is. 57:15. 'Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy,' &c. There is no affectation of words there, being below the majesty of the divine law: none are spared, but the scripture speaks as freely and plainly to the great as to the small, to the rich as to the poor.

4. The consent of all the parts of scripture; though written by several hands, and at different times, yet all of them so agreeing in their precepts, narratives of matters of fact, and designs, that there is no irreconcilable difference to be found amongst them. But here the Socinians call us to consider this point at more length; for they say that there is some repugnancy in the scriptures in some things of

little or no moment, and that not a seeming but real repugnancy. But we believe that in nothing does one holy writer differ from another in the scriptures, but that such things as seem to be repugnant do in themselves most exactly agree. This principle I shall endeavour to prove.

(1.) There are no things in the Scriptures of little or no moment; and if so, the writers could not err in them. That there are no such things in it; the scripture plainly teaches, as in the text, All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable, &c. Rom. 15:4. 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.' The Jews said, that there was not one point in scripture but mountains of mysteries hang on it. See Matth. 5:18. It argues a profane spirit to talk of the scriptures at that rate. The people of God know that many a time they have read over a scripture in which they could see little or nothing, but afterwards they have seen a great deal in it when the Spirit hath been commentator: and though in some things we never see any weighty thing, must we therefore conclude that there is none there?

(2.) The holy penmen were, in all that they wrote, acted and guided by the Spirit of God, or wrote all by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, as says the text, and 2 Pet. 1:20, 21. If all scripture was given by inspiration, if no scripture be of private interpretation, nor came by the will of man, but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, how can there be any error in any passage of scripture? If the scriptures be the word of God, they must be altogether pure, Psal. 19:7, 8.

(3.) Those things in which there is some repugnancy betwixt the penmen of the scriptures, are either a part of the canonical scripture, or not. If they be, then [1.] All scripture is not given by inspiration of God. [2.] The scriptures are holy scriptures, Rom. 1:2.; but errors, whether in greater or lesser things, are unholy, and cannot be a part

of the holy scriptures. If they be no part of the holy scriptures, why do they charge the holy scriptures with errors therein?

(4.) If it be so that there is such repugnancy in the scriptures, then they cannot found certain and divine faith; for a fallible testimony can ground only a fallible belief. And how shall we know when they are right, and when they are wrong? One says that he is guided by the Spirit, and tells us such a thing; another says the same, and tells us the contrary: Whom shall we believe? If you say it must be determined by the greater number of the holy penmen, it is well known, that amongst those who are fallible, one may be righter than many. But this is plainly to lean to human testimony; for one speaking by the Spirit is as much to be believed as ten thousand. So that this truly dissolves the authority of the whole scriptures.

In short, we refuse that there are any real inconsistencies or contradictions in the holy oracles of God. Whatever seeming inconsistencies or repugnancies there may be, they may be easily reconciled, and have been actually reconciled to satisfy every sober person, by many learned divines, whose writings may be consulted on this head.

5. This scope of the whole scriptures, which is to give all glory to God. The design of them is to exalt none but the infinite majesty of Heaven, to humble all mankind, and empty them of themselves, that God's grace may be all, and men themselves nothing, but entirely dependent on the mercy of God through Jesus Christ.

6. The full discovery it makes of the way of man's salvation. Who could ever have told of the Son of God his dying for the sins of the elect, and have made a discovery of the way of salvation by faith, which the scripture hath plainly set down?

7. The entire perfection of the scripture; that is, the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's

salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture.

There are two ways how matters of faith and life are set down in the scriptures. The one is when the thing is set down expressly in so many words; as the unlawfulness of murder, when it is said, 'Thou shalt not kill;' the ordinance of baptism, as in that, 'Go and teach all nations, baptising them,' &c. The other is by good and necessary consequence, which is when the thing itself is not found in the scriptures in so many words, but doth evidently (in itself) and necessarily flow from the express words of scripture, as the baptising of infants is by good and necessary consequence drawn from that, 'Go ye, and baptise all nations.'

Here I shall first prove, that, besides what is to be found in express words in the scriptures, good and necessary consequences deduced therefrom are also to be admitted, as truly binding as what is declared in express words there, whether in fundamentals or in such things as are built on the foundation. If one can prove any thing by good and necessary consequence from the scripture, it is all one, as to the binding power on men's consciences, as if it were expressly set down in so many words.

(1.) Good and necessary consequences are such as the word is designed for. What is deduced from them, so is indeed the sense and meaning of the words; and if you have the words without the meaning of them, or without the full meaning of them, in so far ye come short of the true intent of the words. If I bid a man draw near the fire, do I not desire him to warm himself, though I speak not one word of his warming himself? Were not the scriptures written for that end, that 'we through patience and comfort of them might have hope?' Rom. 15:4. But this cannot be obtained without the use of consequences. Are they not profitable for doctrine,—'that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works?' 2 Tim. 3:16. But can this be had without the use of consequences?

(2.) The great fundamental article, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, before the New Testament was written, could not be proved to the Jews by express scripture testimony, but by good and necessary consequence; yet Christ tells them that there could be no salvation for them without the belief of this. 'If ye believe not that I am he (the Messiah),' says he, 'ye shall die in your sins.' John 8:24.

(3.) Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, while he would prove the fundamental article of the resurrection against the Sadducees, does not seek after a text that said in express words, that the dead shall rise again, but proves it by good consequence, yet no less firmly than if he had produced an express text for it, Matth. 22:32. And it is no less evident that the apostles follow him in this method; as in treating of the resurrection of Christ, Acts 2:25 of the resurrection of all mankind, 1 Cor. 15 and of the justification of a sinner before God, in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians.

(4.) Such as reject all arguing from scripture by consequences, must either confess that by no scripture this way is condemned, or else they must adduce some express scripture text forbidding it. The last they can never do. If they say the first, then it is approved; otherwise the scripture is no perfect rule of faith and practice, which we shall immediately shew to be false. If they say that the scripture leaves it indifferent, then I ask, how dare they condemn it?

(5.) Refusing to admit good and necessary consequences from scripture, overturns all religion, both law and gospel, faith and practice. For how shall it be proved, that John or James are obliged to obey the law, and believe the gospel but by consequence? where will they find an express text for these? Only the law speaks to all, the gospel to every hearer of it, and consequently they oblige thee and me. This way, then, of any doctrine its being set down in the scripture being admitted, we are to prove next.

That the scriptures are a perfect rule of faith and manner; or that the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own

glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down therein, &c.

1. God hath expressly forbidden to add any thing unto his word; therefore it needs no addition, and so is perfect Deut. 4:2. 'Ye shall not add unto the word that I command you.' Consider what ye speak of; even of statutes and judgments; statutes, ceremonies, and rites of worship; even to these he will have nothing added. So we have all additions prohibited, Prov. 30:6; and that under a severe penalty, Rev. 22:18.

2. 'The law of the Lord is perfect,' as is expressly asserted, Psal. 19:8. There it is said of it, (1.) it converts the soul; (2.) makes wise the simple; (3.) rejoiceth the heart; and (4.) enlightens the eyes. The apostle plainly asserts the perfection of it, while he tells us, 2 Tim. 3:15 that it is 'able to make a man wise unto salvation.' How can it be so, unless it teach all things necessary to salvation? It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, &c. What can be desired more? And that ye may be sure there is nothing wanting in it, he tells you, it is given for that purpose, 'that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' So Christ saith, 'They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them,' Luke 16:29.; clearly importing, that in them is contained what is sufficient to salvation.

3. Consider the end for which the scriptures were written, even 'that believing men may have life,' John 20:31.; that 'through patience and comfort of the scriptures they might have hope,' Rom. 15:4. If any thing necessary to salvation were not in them, how would they answer the end for which they were written?

4. The Lord Jesus taught his disciples all that he had heard of the Father, viz. necessary to their salvation, John 15:15. He commissions them to teach all others, even to the end of the world, what he commanded them, Matth. 28:20. But this they could not do viva voce; therefore they did it in their writings. And whoso considers how exact the apostles were of teaching things of lesser moment, as

what day the collection for the poor should be made, &c. cannot think they would neglect any thing necessary to salvation, unless they could not through ignorance or forgetfulness; neither of which can be imputed to them in their writings, being led by the Spirit of God infallibly.

5. The nature of the scriptures teaches us their perfection. For if they be not perfect they cannot be a rule; for a rule must always be commensurable to the thing to be regulated. They are Christ's testament, to which nothing is to be added, being confirmed.

I shall now deduce some inferences from this subject.

1. The holy penmen of the scriptures had a command from God to write, and did not write only occasionally without a command. For that inspiration was an internal command, whereby the Spirit moved them to write, 2 Pet. 1:21.

2. The penmen of the scriptures were infallible in their writing, so that they were not mistaken in any thing, even of the least moment: far less is there any real contradiction among them, being all guided by the same Spirit, who inspired the very words, and kept them from all error, 2 Pet. 1:20, 21.

3. The authority of the scripture in itself, that is, the power it hath to bind the conscience, does not depend on the church, but wholly on God, the author of it. For,

(1.) The church is built upon the scriptures, Eph. 2:20. 'Upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles.' This foundation is not personal; 'for other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ:' but it is doctrinal, the doctrine of the prophets and apostles. Now, it is clear, that the superstructure depends on the foundation, not the foundation on it.

(2.) If the authority of the scriptures depended on the church, then they behoved first of all to believe the authority of the church without

the scriptures, and our faith should be built upon human testimony, which is fallible; but we believe the church for the scriptures, and no otherwise, Isa. 8:20 and human testimony cannot found divine faith.

(3.) Whence can any prove that the church is to be believed but from the scripture? and then to say, that the scriptures must be believed for the church's testimony, is a circle unworthy of men of sense.

(4.) Either the church had reason to receive the scriptures or not. If they had no reason to receive them, they have as little reason to impose them on others. If they had, what was it, but that it was truth, and worthy to be received? Therefore their testimony does not make it truth, or worthy to be believed and obeyed.

(5.) The scripture is God's own word, 2 Tim. 3:16. How blasphemous is it then to deny faith unto God in the scriptures, while he speaks to us in them, unless the testimony of men give authority to his word? This is as much as to say, that God hath his authority from the church, and that he ought not to be believed or obeyed, unless the church commanded it; which is most blasphemous. Of this blasphemy is the church of Rome guilty, who roundly assort that the authority of the scripture depends on the church. I shall only add, that this is the high way to keep Christians off from convincing Turks, Pagans, and Jews, as to the New Testament, while we tell them that the authority of the scripture, wherein our religion is laid down, depends on the church, and that the scriptures are true, because the church says it.

4. The authority of the scripture as to us is not from the church, but from itself; that is, the reason why we receive the scripture as the word of God, it is not because the church says it is so, but because it evidences itself to be so. For as God's works do themselves tell their Maker, so his word declares the Speaker; so that a spiritual discernor must needs say, on the reading of it, though none should recommend, it is the voice of God, not of men. Can we discern an unlearned man's letter from that of a learned man? and doth not

God's word bear a divine character? It is a light, a lamp, &c. the nature of which is to discover itself. Thus there is objective evidence enough in the scripture; though indeed the subjective evidence cannot be had but by the Spirit of God; so that to him bearing witness by and with the word, we owe the full assurance that it is God's word, 1 Cor. 2:10, 14. And this is the reason why great scholars may be less persuaded of this truth, than the most unlearned peasants; because, though the sun discovers itself sufficiently, yet blind men cannot see it.

Now, that the inward illumination of the Spirit of God is necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the word, I shall prove by the following arguments.

1. The scripture makes this inward illumination of the Spirit of God necessary for understanding the scriptures, while it ascribes the same wholly unto the Spirit, Matth. 16:17. 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it, [Christ's being the Son of the living God] unto thee, but my father which is in heaven;' 1 Cor. 2:10, 11, 12. 'God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the Spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.' If the Spirit of God take the same unto himself as his own proper work, how can any arrogate it to themselves, as if by the power of nature they were able for it?

2. There is an utter inability in man by nature to know savingly the things of God. They are above his capacity while he remains in his natural state, and nothing can act beyond the sphere of its activity. This is plain from 1 Cor. 2:14 where not only the act of receiving them is denied to natural men, but the very power of discerning them; and the reason is given, 'because they are spiritually discerned,' and he wants the organ of discerning spiritually. And this discerning is appropriated to the spiritual man, ver. 15. Had not the

Israelites in the wilderness very great external helps to gain the knowledge of the things of God, Deut. 29? but all was ineffectual. What was the want then? See ver. 4. 'The Lord hath not given you (says Moses, to them) an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear.'

3. If it were not the spiritual illumination that gave this saving understanding of the things of God, then the greatest adepts in human literature would have most of the saving knowledge of such things as are revealed in the word. This plainly follows: But that it is not so, the scripture testifies, 1 Cor. 1:20, 26, 27, 28. 'Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise: and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.' Many times it is seen to be quite otherwise. And what makes the difference? See Matth. 11:25. 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth (says Christ), because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' Even as he hath put this treasure in earthen vessels, to the end the praise might be of God, that it may be seen it is not the act of the preacher, but the power of the Spirit, that gives true understanding.

4. Men without the saving illumination of the Spirit are so far from attaining sufficient knowledge of the things revealed in the word of God, that they judge them foolish, 1 Cor. 2:14. The doctrine concerning Christ crucified was to the Jews, who had the law and the prophets, a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks, who excelled in human learning, foolishness, 1 Cor. 1:23.; yea, no less than madness, Acts 26:24. Nay, even the godly themselves, when without the actual influence of the Spirit, are not far from reckoning as they do who are

in nature; as in the case of the apostles, looking on the account brought them of the resurrection of their Lord as an idle tale, and not believing it, Luke 24:11. The doctrine of Christ's resurrection seemed to the disciples as idle tales; how much more so to men utterly destitute of the Spirit, who many times are besides judicially blinded? 2 Cor. 4:4.

5. The Lord promises his Spirit to the end men may be taught to know the truths of God savingly, Ezek. 36:26. John 14:16, 17 and 16:12, 13. Has he promised his Spirit in vain? or are we sufficiently furnished already? If so, why does he promise his Spirit?

6. The prayers of the saints for this illumination prove the necessity of it, Psal. 119:18. Eph. 1:17, 18. Col. 1:9. And they pray so, because they feel the need of it: the experience of the Spirit is that against which there is no disputing.

7. Let us consider that passage, John 6:45. 'And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' It is plain that by coming unto Christ is meant saying faith in him. Now, in order to this there is a promise, that they shall all, viz. all the elect, for faith is the saying faith of God's elect, be taught of God, viz. by the Spirit, not merely by external revelation, because whosoever thus hears comes unto Christ: but it is certain that all come not to Christ that hear, and learn of the Father by external revelation only. From all, which it is evident, that unto the sufficient understanding of the things revealed in the scripture the teaching of the Spirit is necessary; and that all who attain to the saving knowledge of these things do believe.

What then remains upon this head but, that we diligently read the holy scriptures as being the word of God, and the rule which he hath given to direct us both as to faith and practice; and that we fervently pray to God, that he may give us his holy Spirit to enlighten our minds in the saving knowledge of the word, without which we will

remain in the dark, and the word will be but a dead letter to us? Lord open our eyes, that we may understand thy word.

THE UTILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES AS A RULE

I proceed to the consideration of another Doctrine.

DOCT. 'The scriptures are the rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God.'

Here I shall only give the properties of this rule.

1. It is a perspicuous or clear rule. For though all things in scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due sense of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

(1.) With respect to all things necessary to salvation, whether for faith or practice, it cannot be denied, but there are portions of the scripture very obscure, which possibly are not rightly interpreted even to this day; but in such things as are necessary to salvation, they are clear. And in this respect it hath been said, that the scriptures are a depth wherein a lamb may wade, and an elephant may swim.

(2.) Though some things, the faith of which is necessary to salvation, be high and incomprehensible mysteries, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, of the incarnation of the Son of God, &c. yet the way of propounding them is clear.

(3.) It may be that what is truly necessary unto salvation may be very obscurely laid down in some place of scripture; yet in some other place we shall find the same thing clearly propounded:

(4.) And that so as not only the learned, but even the unlearned, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them; which you must carefully remember is meant here of believing persons, who have the inward illumination of the Spirit, removing their own natural darkness: for if ye shall understand it of unbelievers, it contradicts what we have laid down above, relating to the necessity of spiritual illumination. And so the sense is, that not only may the learned, but even the unlearned Christian, attain to a sufficient understanding of the word;

(5.) Providing they make use of the ordinary means appointed of God for the understanding of them; reading attentively and devoutly with prayer and meditation on them, &c.

This perspicuity of the scriptures I shall prove by the following arguments.

(1.) The scripture plainly teaches its own perspicuity and clearness in this sense. It is called a lamp and a light, Psal. 119:105. The very 'entrance of it (it is said) gives light and understanding to the simple,' ver. 130. See Prov. 6:23. The apostle, 2 Pet. 1:19 calls the holy scriptures a light, and particularly the word of prophecy, or the prophetic word, which of all the rest seems most dark, yet this he calls a light and a shining light, shining in a dark place; shewing thereby, that where it comes and shines, though the place be of itself dark, yet it dispels the darkness.

(2.) Such is the way God hath delivered his word, that its commands are not remote from the understanding; the meanest believer hath no reason to complain of the difficulty of it in the things necessary to salvation, Deut. 30:11. &c. 'For this command which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off: It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it in unto us, that we may hear it, and do it! But the word is

very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.'

(3.) If all things necessary to salvation be understood by all sincere Christians, and this by virtue of the Spirit dwelling in every believer, then the scriptures are clear in all things necessary to salvation to the meanest believer. But the former is true: 1 Cor. 2:15. 'He that is spiritual judgeth all things;' 1 John 2:20, 27. 'Ye have an unction from the holy One, and ye know all things. The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but the same anointing teacheth you of all things.' Consider to whom John is there speaking, not only to learned men and great divines, but to all believers, even to little children; to all that have the Spirit, which is common to all; 'for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'

(4.) The things that are necessary to salvation are hid only to unbelievers, in whom the God of this world hath blinded their eyes; as for others, God himself hath taught them, 2 Cor. 4:4, 6.

(5.) God hath promised to write his law in his people's hearts, and that he himself will teach them to know himself, Jer. 31:33, 34; therefore the scripture must needs be perspicuous and clear in things necessary to salvation: for that which is written in our hearts cannot be but clear unto us; and that which God himself teacheth us cannot be obscure, for who teacheth like God?

(6.) If the scriptures be not clear in themselves to all believers, but that all its perspicuity depends on the interpretation of the church, then our faith is to be ultimately resolved into the testimony of man; but that cannot be, for human testimony is not infallible and authentic, and therefore cannot found divine faith and an infallible persuasion. The reason of the consequence is clear. Hearers are obliged if they will not pin their faith on men's sleeves, to compare the interpretations given by men, with the scriptures themselves;

which is utterly impracticable, unless the scriptures be clear in themselves in such things as are necessary to salvation.

(7.) The perspicuity of the scripture appears, if ye consider their author, who is God himself, the Father of lights; and the end for which he gave the scriptures unto the church, viz. that they might be a rule of faith and life. Of his power to speak plainly, who can doubt? and the end for which they are given may sufficiently satisfy as to his will to speak so; for how can they be a rule to us, if wrapt up so as we cannot understand them without the church's interpretation, in those things that are necessary to salvation?

2. It is a perfect rule. There is nothing necessary to be believed or done but what is to be found there. It is a perfect rule for us to walk by in the way to heaven and glory. What can be more desired than that in the text, It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness? 'The law of the Lord is perfect,' Psal. 19:7. The scriptures were written that men might have life, John 20:31 and comfort and hope in all conditions, Rom. 15:4. But I insisted on this more fully in the preceding doctrine.

3. It is the only rule. Every doctrine taught any manner of way in religion must be brought to this rule, and if it agree not with it, must be rejected, Isa. 8:20. Hereby traditions must be tried, Matth. 15:3; and spirits or revelations, 1 John 4:1; and nothing must be added to it, Prov. 30:6. Rev. 22:18. I shall shut up with a few inferences.

Inf. 1. The opinions of fathers, decrees of councils, acts of assemblies, covenants, and minister's sermons, are not the rule of faith to us; nor can any of them bind us but in so far as they are agreeable to the word of God, by which all of them must be judged and examined, Isa. 8:20.

2. Translations of the scriptures into the vulgar languages are most necessary and profitable. How otherwise should the unlearned read them, if they were not translated? It was by means of these

translations that Romish Babel was brought down at the Reformation, as by the division of tongues the building of old Babel was hindered. And that makes the Papists such enemies to translations of the scriptures. We have reason to bless God for human learning, by which these translations are made, seeing the prophets and apostles wrote in languages which but few understand.

3. This may give us a just abhorrence of Popery, which almost in every point on this head casts dust on the scriptures. The Papists deny the necessity of translations; will not allow the people the free reading of the Bible; cry out on it for its obscurity; accuse it of imperfection; and add their traditions to it, that it may not be the only rule. And thus they blaspheme both God and his word, and expose themselves to that direful threatening, Rev. 22:18.

4. This may also give us a just detestation of Quakerism, which sets up the light within men, which in very deed is nothing but a natural conscience, and the spirit without the scriptures, to be a rule to men. But their light is but darkness, and their spirit a spirit of darkness and delusion, if it agree not with the scriptures, Isa. 8:20 and must be tried and examined by the scriptures, 1 John 4:1. The Quakers are a dangerous set of people that overturn the foundation of true religion.

5. This may likewise give us a just abhorrence of the superstition and ceremonies of the church of England, wherewith they have corrupted the worship of God, rejecting the simplicity of gospel-worship, and regulating their worship in many things not by the scripture, but the dregs of Antichrist: Deut 4:2. 'Ye shall not add unto the word that I command you.' What word? Statutes, ver. 1 ceremonies and rites of worship. To baptize with water is Christ's command; but who has added the sign of the cross? Christ instituted the sacrament of the supper: but who has added kneeling, to overturn the table-gesture, which we have from Christ's own example? The Lord's day is of divine institution: but whose are the numerous holidays observed in the church of England? Matth. 15:9. What is all this but an accusing

the scripture of imperfection, as if God had not laid down a sufficient rule to teach us how we may glorify him: as if they were ashamed of simple scripture-worship, but they must deck it up in the whorish garments made by their own brains? God has a special zeal for his worship; and it becomes us to quicken our zeal for it, in a time when enemies are bringing in innovations in worship into this church, and setting up their Dagon beside the ark. But though God should, for our contempt of our pure worship, plague the land with this superstitious worship once more, yet as sure as Babylon shall fall, it shall fall and flee before the glory of the latter days.

6. Lastly, Be exhorted to study the holy scriptures. Read them in your families, and read them in secret, and cry for the Holy Spirit, who dictated them, to make you understand them. Lock them not up in your chests, and let them not lie dusty in your windows, as too many do to their shame and disgrace, lest the dust of them witness against you. Prefer the Bible to all other books, as the book whereof God himself is the author. Prize and esteem it, as showing you the way to salvation, as a lamp to your feet, and a light to your paths.

THE SCOPE OF THE SCRIPTURES

1 TIM. 1:13.—Hold fast the form of sound words—in faith and love.

IN these words there is, (1.) The character of scripture-doctrine; it is sound words; sound and pure in itself, and sound in its effects, being of a soul-healing virtue, Ezek. 47:9. (2.) The sum of it, faith, shewing what we are to believe; and love, what we are to do, 1 John 5:3. John 14:15. This love has a particular relation to Christ, all our obedience being to be offered unto God through him, as our faith fixes on God through him. This was what the apostle preached. (3.) Our duty with respect to it; to hold fast the form of sound words. This signifies, [1.] To have a pattern of the doctrine in our minds, to which all that

ministers teach must be conformable. (2.) To hold it fast; to cleave to, and keep hold of it, without flinching from it, whatever dangers or difficulties may attend the doing so. Both these senses are implied in the words.

The text affords the following doctrinal proposition.

DOCT. "The scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man."

As to the matter of scripture-doctrine.

1. Some things are taught in the scriptures less principally; that is, the main design of the scriptures is not to teach these things; neither are they taught for themselves, but for the respect they have to other things. Thus in the scripture we may learn the knowledge of several natural things, as of the nature of some trees, birds, beasts, &c. of husbandry, the customs of several nations, especially of the Jews, &c. But these and such like things are only taught in the scripture, as having some respect to our faith and obedience. So the vine tree is described, Ezek. 15 to hold forth the uselessness of barren professors, &c. However, whatsoever is taught in the scriptures, seeing the scripture is God's word, is all to be received by divine faith, though all scripture-truths are not of equal importance.

2. The scripture teaches some things chiefly. And these are faith and obedience. These are the two parts of the doctrine of the Bible. Whatsoever concerns religion, or the salvation of souls, in the Old and New Testament, may be reduced to one of these two heads: It is either an article of faith, or a point of obedience.

Here I shall consider,

I. The nature of faith and obedience, and the connection betwixt the two.

II. The manner of the scripture's teaching.

III. The sense of scripture.

IV. Shew that the Spirit of God speaking in the scriptures is the supreme judge of controversies in religion.

I. Let us consider the nature of that faith and obedience which the scripture teaches, with the connexion betwixt the two.

First, As to faith. Divine faith is a believing of what God has revealed, because God has said it, or revealed it. People may believe scripture-truths, but not with a divine faith, unless they believe it on that very ground, the authority of God speaking in his word. And this divine faith is the product of the Spirit of God in the heart of a sinner, implanting the habit or principle of faith there, and exciting it to a hearty reception and firm belief of whatever God reveals in his word. And the faith which the scripture teaches is what a man is to believe concerning God. This may be reduced to four heads: What God is, the persons in the Godhead, the decrees of God relating to every thing that comes to pass, and the execution of them in his works of creation and providence. Now, though the works of creation and providence shew that there is a God, yet that fundamental truth, that God is, and the doctrines relating to the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Essence, God's acts and purposes, the creation of all things, the state of man at his creation, his fall, and his recovery by the mediation and satisfaction of Christ, are only to be learned from the holy scriptures. Hence we may infer,

1. That there can be no right knowledge of God acquired in an ordinary way without the scriptures, Matt. 22:29. "Ye do err (said Christ to the Sadducees), not knowing the scriptures." As there must be a dark night where the light is gone, so those places of the earth must needs be dark, and without the saving knowledge of God, that want the scriptures. Thus the Apostle tells the Ephesians, that, before they were visited with the light of the gospel, they were "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers

from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Eph. 2:12.

2. That where the scriptures are not known, there can be no saving faith. For, says the apostle, Rom. 10:14, 15, 17. 'How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.'

3. That there is nothing we are bound to believe as a part of faith but what the scripture teaches, be who they will that propose it, and whatever they may pretend for their warrant. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because their is no light in them,' Isa. 8:20. No man must be our master in these things: 'For one is our master, even Christ,' Matth. 23:10. He is Lord of our faith, and we are bound to believe whatever he has revealed in his word.

Secondly, As to obedience, it is that duty which God requires of man. It is that duty and obedience which man owes to God, to his will and laws, in respect of God's universal supremacy and sovereign authority over man; and which he should render to him out of love and gratitude. The scriptures are the holy oracle from whence we are to learn our duty, Psal. 19:11. 'By them is thy servant warned,' says David. The Bible is the light we are to take heed to, that we may know how to steer our course, and order the several steps of our life. 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light to my path,' says the Psalmist, Psal. 119:105. From whence we may infer.

1. That there can be no sufficient knowledge of the duty which we owe to God without the scriptures. Though the light of nature does in some measure shew our duty to God, yet it is too dim to take up the will of God sufficiently in order to salvation.

2. That there can be no right obedience yielded to God without them. Men that walk in the dark must needs stumble; and the works that are wrought in the dark will never abide the light; for there is no working rightly by guess in this matter. All proper obedience to God must be learned from the scriptures.

3. That there is no point of duty that we are called to, but what the scripture teaches, Isa. 8:20 forecited. Men must neither make duties to themselves, or others, but what God has made duty. The law of God is exceeding broad, and reaches the whole conversation of man, outward and inward, Psal. 19 and man is bound to conform himself to it alone as the rule of his duty.

Thirdly, As to the connexion of these two, faith and obedience are joined together, because there is no true faith but what is followed with obedience, and no true obedience but what flows from faith. Faith is the loadstone of obedience, and obedience the touchstone of faith, as appears from Jam. 2 passim. They that want faith cannot be holy; and they that have true faith, their faith will work by love. Hence we may see,

1. That faith is the foundation of duty or obedience, and not obedience or duty the foundation of faith, Tit 3:8 and that the things to be believed are placed before the things to be practised, in order to distinguish between the order of things in the covenant of grace, and what they were under the covenant of works. Under the latter, doing, or perfect obedience to the law, was the foundation of the promised privilege of life; but under the former, the promise is to be believed, and the promised life is to be freely received: and thereupon follows the believer's obedience to the law, out of gratitude and love for the mercy received. This appears from the order laid down by God himself in delivering the moral law from mount Sinai. He lays the foundation of faith, first of all, in these words, 'I am the Lord thy God,' &c. which is the sum and substance of the covenant of grace; and then follows the law of the ten commandments, which is as it were grafted upon this declaration of sovereign grace and love, Exod.

20:2–18. And let it be remembered, that the apostle Paul calls gospel-obedience the obedience of faith as springing from and founded upon faith. And if we examine the order of doctrine laid down in all his epistles, we shall find, that he first propounds the doctrine of faith, or what man is to believe, and upon that foundation inculcates the duties that are to be practised.

2. That all works without faith are dead, and so cannot please God. For whatsoever is not of faith is sin; and without or separate from Christ we can do nothing. Faith is the principle of all holy and acceptable obedience.

3. That those who inculcate moral duties without discovering the necessity of regeneration, and union with Christ, as the source of all true obedience, are foolish builders; they lay their foundation on the sand, and the superstructure they raise will soon be overturned; and they pervert the gospel of Christ. Such would do well to consider what the Apostle says, Gal. 1:9. 'If any man preach any other gospel unto you than ye have received, let him be accursed.'

II. I proceed now to consider the manner of the scripture's teaching.

1. The scripture teaches some things expressly in so many words; as, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,' &c. Other things it teaches by good and necessary consequence; as, that infants are to be baptized. Now, whatever can be proved by just and necessary consequence from sacred writ, is all one, as to the binding power on men's consciences, as if it were taught there in so many words, whether it be in points of faith or obedience.

2. The scriptures teach but externally. It is the Spirit that teaches internally. The scriptures externally reveal what we are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man; but the inward illumination of the Spirit of God is necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the scriptures, for

several reasons which I mentioned in the former discourse, and shall not now repeat.

III. I come now to consider the sense of the scripture.

1. The sense of the scripture is but one, and not manifold. There may be several parts of that one sense subordinate one to another; as some prophecies have a respect to the deliverance from Babylon, the spiritual by Christ, and the eternal in heaven; and some passages have one thing that is typical of another: yet these are but one full sense, only that may be of two sorts; one is simple, and another compound. Some scriptures have only a simple sense, containing a declaration of one thing only; and that is either proper or figurative. A proper sense is that which arises from the words taken properly, and the figurative from the words taken figuratively. Some have a simple proper sense, as, 'God is a Spirit, God created the heavens and the earth;' which are to be understood according to the propriety of the words. Some have a simple figurative sense; as, 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away,' &c. These have but one simple sense; but then it is the figurative, and is not to be understood according to the propriety of the words, as if Christ were a tree, &c. Thus you see what the simple sense is. The compound or mixed sense is found wherein one thing is held forth as a type of the other; and so it consists of two parts, the one respecting the type, the other the antitype; which are not two senses, but two parts of that one and entire sense intended by the Holy Ghost: e. g. Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, that those who were stung by the fiery serpents might look to it and be healed. The full sense of which is, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, that, &c. even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.' Here is a literal and mystical sense, which make up one full sense betwixt them. Those scriptures that have this compound sense are sometimes fulfilled properly (or literally, as it is taken in opposition to figuratively) in the type and antitype both; as Hos. 11:1. 'I have called my Son out of Egypt,' which

was literally true both of Israel and Christ. Sometimes figuratively in the type, and properly in the antitype, as Psal. 69:21. 'They gave me vinegar to drink.' Sometimes properly in the type, and figuratively in the antitype, as Psal. 2:9. 'Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron.' Compare 2 Sam. 12:31. Sometimes figuratively in both, as Psal. 41:9. 'Yea mine own familiar friend—hath lifted up his heel against me;' which is meant of Ahitophel and Judas. Now the sense of the scripture must be but one, and not manifold, that is, quite different and no wise subordinate one to another, because of the unity of truth, and because of the perspicuity of the scripture.

2. Where there is a question about the true sense of scripture, it must be found out what it is by searching other places that speak more clearly, the scripture itself being the infallible rule of interpreting scripture. Now that it is so, appears from the following arguments.

(1.) The Holy Spirit gives this as a rule, 2 Pet. 1:20, 21. After the apostle had called the Christians to take heed to the scripture, he gives them this rule for understanding it, 'Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation, but as men moved by the Holy Ghost spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' As it came; so it is to be expounded: but it came not by the will of man; therefore we are not to rest on men for the sense of it, but holy men speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and so never erring; therefore we are to look to the dictates of the same Spirit in other places.

(2.) There are several approved examples of this, comparing one scripture with another, to find out the meaning of the Holy Ghost; as Acts 15:15. 'And to this agree the words of the prophet,' &c. The Bereans are commended for this, Acts 17:11. Yea, Christ himself makes use of this to shew the true sense of the scripture against the devil, Matth. 4:6. 'Cast thyself down, (said that wicked spirit): for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee,' &c. Ver. 7. 'It is written again, (says Christ), Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy

God.' And thus our Lord makes out the true sense of that scripture, that it is to be understood only with respect to them who do not cast themselves on a tempting of God. Some more will occur concerning this point under the next head.

This then is the great, chief, and infallible rule of interpretation of scripture, to compare one passage with another. Other things may be added as helps and means in order to find out the true sense.

1. The knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek, in which languages the prophets and apostles wrote, is an excellent mean to the right understanding of the scriptures. These original tongues are the best commentaries on scripture; and many times it is found so by those that know them.

2. Diligently consider the scope and design of the Holy Ghost in the portion of scripture where ye find difficulty, the coherence and context, with all circumstances going before and following. *Nullo est objectio in lege quæ non habet solutionem in latere* says a rabbi, *Quis scopus, impellens, sedes, tempusque, locusque, et modus, hæc septem scripturæ attendito lector.*

3. Distinguish proper from improper words. The scripture frequently uses improper and figurative expressions, which, if taken as the letters sound, will found a very absurd sense.

4. The commentaries of godly and learned writers are not to be neglected.

5. The reading also of profane history is of notable use in the knowledge of the prophetic writings. And the knowledge of the Jewish customs brings great light to the scriptures.

6. Lastly, Always take heed to the analogy of faith, and see there be no deviating therefrom: for the Spirit of God speaking in the scripture is always one and the same; and therefore we are never to think that one scripture can be contrary to another, or the known

doctrine of the Bible and the form of sound words: e. g. 'This is my body which is broken for you;' it cannot be so understood as if Christ's body were locally present in the sacrament; 'because we believe, according to the constant doctrine of scripture, that Christ is ascended into heaven, and will come again at the last day; and till then the heavens must contain him. So we must not take the words literally, when it is contrary to modesty, as when Isaiah is bid go naked, Isa. 20:2.; or to piety, to cut off the right hand, &c. More particularly,

1. Go to God for his Spirit to teach you, Psal. 119:18. It is Christ's work to give people to understand the scriptures. If you would know what Paul says, pray for the spirit by which he wrote.

2. Take heed of a carnal, earthly, and fleshly mind. When the heart is carnal, the mind is much blinded, and so utterly unfit for searching the scriptures.

3. Endeavour to be exercised unto godliness. An exercised frame proves sometimes an excellent commentator.

4. Lastly, Endeavour to practise what you know.

IV. I proceed to shew that the spirit of God speaking in scripture is the supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest.

This is a very important point, and upon it depends the whole of religion. One man says so, another roan says otherwise: the question is, Who shall be judge, and to whose determination are we to stand and acquiesce in? Four sundry ways do men go here.

First, Enthusiasts set up the private spirit, and its revelations, without the Spirit, for the judge of controversies. But whatever these may pretend, the scripture is our only rule. For,

1. Whatever revelation or light men may pretend to, God binds them and us to the written word, Isa. 8:20. 'If they speak not according to the scriptures,' it is not true light, but 'because there is no light in them,' that makes it so: for going against the word, they shew themselves to be acted with a spirit of delusion, 1 John 4:6.

2. The Apostle Paul devotes them to a curse, though they were angels, who preach any other gospel than what he preached, and the Galatians received from his hand, Gal. 1:8, 9; not only a gospel contrary to it, but another, any thing diverse from or besides it, though not contrary to it. And if it be contrary the Spirit is contrary to himself, for he is the author of the scriptures.

3. We are commanded to 'try the spirits,' 1 John 4:1. Now, how must they be tried but by a rule; and what rule have we to try them by but the written word? This was the rule which the Bereans made use of to try the spirit of the apostles, for which they are highly commended. It is that rule which Christ sends the Pharisees to try his own doctrine by, John 5:40. But by the scriptures we cannot try the spirits, unless we lay them to that rule, and observe whether or not the spirits speak as the scriptures do; and then how can the new revelations be received?

4. The spirit's revelations are either a complete or partial rule. If our complete rule, then the scriptures are useless which is blasphemous, and contrary to all those commands that requires us to give attendance to the reading, searching, &c. of them. If they be a partial rule only, then they either teach according to the scripture, or not. If according to it, then it is no new revelation, but what the scripture already affords us. If not, it is because there is no light in them, Isa. 8:20.

There is one scripture that we must more narrowly inquire into, both because it is abused by the adversaries in this point, and affords us an argument for our doctrine, The passage is, 2 Pet. 1:19. 'We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take

heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.' Enthusiasts here, by the day-star arising in the heart, understand some extraordinary revelation and light which God sets up in the soul, which when it is set up, the person is to take heed to the written word no longer. But, (1.) Whither would these men drive us? They tell us, that all men have a light within them, according to which they must walk; and this is the spirit within us; yet must we still expect a new light to torn us off from the scriptures; (2.) The apostle here plainly prefers the word of prophecy unto an immediate voice from heaven, and that in the very same thing wherein they both agree: how much more preferable is the scripture to new revelations? (3.) This supposes, that the apostles and believers in those days had not this light; for they say, 'We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed.' This being so, we envy not the Quakers their light, which the apostles and these Christians were strangers to.

Some by the day dawning and the day-star arising understand the more clear dispensation which they suppose is to come in the latter days. Others understand by it the sight of God and Christ in glory, till which time the scriptures must be made use of, but no longer. Others understand this as spoken to the believing Jews in reference to the prophets of the Old Testament, to which they did well to take heed, till their gospel light should shine more clearly. Some say, the word until is not to be taken exclusively of the time following that dawning of the day, and day star arising; and thereby understand simply more clear light arising after some darkness, which the people of God may be in for a time; till which light arising they are to take heed to the scriptures; not that they are then to give over taking heed to them. Laying aside that which relates to a more clear dispensation yet to come, because it supposes that then the scriptures must be laid aside, which is very contrary to the scripture, for the Spirit shall never in this life juggle out the word, but his office is to teach, not new things unwritten, but whatever Christ spoke to his disciples: 'He shall bring all things to your remembrance, (says he), whatsoever I have said unto you,' John 14:26: Laying aside that, it is hard to determine

which of the rest is indeed the true meaning of the apostle. Only it seems to bid fairest for the apostle's sense, to say, that he speaks of the more clear knowledge of Christ which the believers at that time were afterwards to have, till which time they did well to take heed to the prophetic word, as it is in the Greek; that is, to the doctrine of the prophets who prophesied of Christ; not that they were then to lay by the use of the prophets, but that then they would be of less use to them than before, when they should attain to a more clear gospel-light; as the candle is of less use when the day dawns than it was before, though it be still useful. And I think it abundantly plain, that the word of prophecy is not here to be understood generally of the whole scripture, as the other interpretations seem to take it, but particularly of the doctrine of the prophets concerning Christ and the gospel, as appears from the phrase, the prophetic word, and the first verse of the following chapter, where he speaks of false prophets that were among the people of the Jews. So by the day-star I understand Christ himself, who is called the morning star, Rev. 22:16. It is true it is here *Pharphoros*, but there *oster ornithes*: but, for ought I know, the first of these is, *apax legomenon*; and though the words be different, the sense is the same, one thing gets but different names. And Christ is called the day-star or morning-star, which we know are both one thing; because, (1.) As the morning star is the most eminent among the stars, and most lucid, as appears by its shining when the appearance of the sun makes the rest disappear; so there is none like Christ among the sons, Cant. 2:3. (2.) As the day-star puts an end to the dark night, so doth Christ's arising in the soul put an end to the night of spiritual darkness. Never was the sight of the day-star so refreshful to the weary traveller in the night, as Christ's appearance in and to the soul; only the apostle calls him here rather the day-star than the sun, because he is speaking of his appearance in this life, whereas the full knowledge of him is deferred till his second coming. So the day-dawning is easily understood. And this is expected to rise not absolutely, but comparatively in respect of degrees of fuller manifestation, as he promises to those that continue in his word, and are his disciples indeed, that they shall know the truth, viz. more fully, John 8:31, 32. And that passage, Hos. 6:3. 'Then shall we know,

if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning,' doth excellently serve to shew us this truth. So there he hath respect to this further manifestation of Christ which they were afterwards to have: but they are not then to give over the prophetic word; for, as was before noticed, the word until is not always exclusive of the following time, as Psal. 110:1. 2 Sam. 6 ult.

Now, if the writings of the prophets be more sure than a voice from heaven, and Christians are commended for taking heed to the same; and when the day-star ariseth in the heart, it shews only the same thing more clearly. What place is there left for new revelations against or besides the scriptures?

Secondly, The Papists set the church upon the tribunal: but what that church is, they do not agree among themselves, whether it be the pope, or a council, or both together. However, they assert that there is in the church a visible and infallible judge of controversies in religion. This we deny, and far more that the pope, or a council approved by him, is such a judge. For,

1. The scripture makes no mention of any such judge, in any of the places where the officers of the church are reckoned up, as Rom. 12:7, 8. 1 Cor. 12:28. Eph. 4:11 nor any where else. And though negative theology, as they say, is not argumentative, yet that cannot have place here, unless we deny the perfection of the scripture, which we have proved already. A positive institution is requisite here.

2. Our faith must not lean upon the testimony or authority of man, 1 Cor. 7:23. 'Be not the servants of men,' not bodily but spiritually; 2 Cor. 1:24. 'Not that we have dominion over your faith;' where the apostle declines, in his own name, and in the name of his fellows, the being of such a judge. But our faith leans on the word of God, Eph. 2:20. 'And are built on the foundation of the prophets,' &c.

3. The doctrine of the church should be examined by the scriptures, Acts 17:11. 'These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in

that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so.' Now he whose sentence is to be examined by another, cannot be the supreme judge of controversies. See Isa. 8:20. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.'

4. Neither pope nor council, conjunctly nor severally, have such properties as are requisite to constitute a supreme judge in controversies of religion; they have no infallibility, or testimony thereof; yea, they have many ways deceived and been deceived. We may appeal from them, as being bound to the scriptures, as well as others. And the church, be what it will, must not be judge in its own cause.

5. Lastly, Here is a controversy in religion, Who is the supreme judge of controversy in religion? Who must decide this, or be supreme judge here? The church cannot, neither pope nor council so decide it in their own favour. That were absurd. Wherefore the Papists themselves are obliged to make another judge of this controversy; and if so, why not of all?

Thirdly, The Socinians set up reason to be the supreme judge of controversies in religion, to whose determination we ought to stand, and therein to acquiesce. There is no doubt but we have much use for reason in matters of religion; as, (1.) To perceive and understand the things revealed in the scripture, Matth. 13:51. (2.) To collate them one with another, Acts 17:11. (3.) To explain the same, Neh. 8:8. (4.) To argue from the scriptures, Matth. 21 ult. (5.) To vindicate the truths from objections, Rom. 9:19, 20. That it is not the judge nor the rule, that is, that reason ought not to be admitted of itself, and according to its principles, to determine controversies of religion, is what we assert. To illustrate this by an example, the scripture says, These three are one; we say we plainly perceive the scripture says so; and therefore, though our reason cannot comprehend, we will believe it, because it is plain the scripture says so. They say, they

cannot believe that there are three persons in the Godhead, and not three gods, because reason is against it; and therefore finding the thing unagreeable to reason, though it were in ever so plain words found in the scripture, they will not believe (as they pretend) it means as the words sound, but will fasten another meaning on the words though never so far fetched. And that it may not be thought that this is the same way that the orthodox go too, in explaining scriptures that are understood figuratively, I shall give an example of that too. The scripture says, Christ is a vine, a door, the bread is his body, &c. We know indeed that this is contrary to reason if expounded literally: but that is not the prime reason why we reject the literal meaning, and on which we build our faith as to the true meaning, as the case is with the Socinians, but because it agrees not with other scriptures to understand it so; which testify that Christ is God and man. Now, that reason is not the supreme judge of controversies in religion, is proved by the following arguments.

1. Reason in an unregenerate man is blind in the matters of God, 1 Cor. 2:14. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;' Eph. 4:17, 18. Eph. 5:8. Except. This only respects reason not illustrated by divine revelation. Ans. By that illustration of reason by divine revelation, they understand either subjective or objective illustration. If they understand it of subjective illustration, they quit that article of their religion, wherein they believe that the mind of man is capable of itself, without the illumination of the Spirit, to attain sufficient knowledge of the mind of God revealed in the scripture. If of objective illustration, by the mere revelation of these truths, then it is false that they assert: For the apostle opposes here the natural man to the spiritual man; and therefore by the natural man is understood every unregenerate man, even that has these truths revealed to him; for, says the apostle, 'they are foolishness unto him.' Now, how can he judge them foolishness if they be not revealed?

2. Reason is not infallible, and therefore cannot be admitted judge in matters concerning our souls. Reason may be deceived. Rom. 3:4 and is not this to shake the foundations of religion, and to pave a way to scepticism and atheism? Except. That is not to be feared where sound reason is admitted judge. But why talk they of sound reason? The adversaries themselves will yield, that reason is unsound in the most part of men. We say, that it is not fully sound in the world; for even the best know but in part; darkness remains in some measure on the minds of all men.

3. Reason must be subject to the scripture, and submit itself to be judged by God speaking there, 2 Cor. 10:4, 5. 'The weapons of our warfare are—mighty—to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations,—and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.' Matters of faith are above the sphere of reason; and therefore as sense is not admitted judge in those things that are above it, so neither reason in those things that are above it, 1 Tim. 3:16.

4. If reason were the supreme judge of controversies, then our faith should be built on ourselves, and the great reason why we believe any principle of religion would be, because it appears so and so to us; which is most absurd. The scripture teaches otherwise, 1 Thess. 2:13. 'Ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God.' Most plainly does our Lord teach this, John 5:34, 'I receive not testimony from men;' chap. 5:39. 'Search the scriptures.'

Fourthly, The orthodox assert the supreme judge of controversies in religion to be the Holy Spirit speaking in the scriptures. This is proved by the following arguments.

1. In the Old and New Testaments, the Lord still sends us to this judge. So that we may neither turn to the right hand nor left from what he there speaks, Deut. 5:32 and 17:11. 'According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee;' Is. 8:20. 'To the law and to the testimony,' &c.; Luke 16:29. 'They have Moses and the

prophets; let them hear them;' John 5:39. 'Search the scriptures.' Some hereto refer that passage, Matth. 19:28. 'Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' In this sense it must be meant of the doctrine they taught as dictated to them by the Holy Ghost.

2. It was the practice of Christ and his apostles to appeal to the Spirit speaking in the scriptures, Matth. 4 where Christ still answers Satan with that, 'It is written,' And so while discoursing with the Sadducees about the resurrection, Matth. 22:31, 32. So also in John, chap. 5 and 10 and Luke 24:44. And so did others, Acts 17:11 and 26:22, 23. 2 Pet. 1:19. Acts 15:15, 16. A careful examination of which passages I recommend to you for your establishment in the truth.

3. To the Spirit of God speaking in the scriptures, and to him only, agree those things that are requisite to constitute one supreme Judge. (1.) We may certainly know that the sentence which he pronounces is true, for he is infallible being God. (2.) We cannot appeal from him, for he is one above whom there is none. (3.) He is no respecter of persons, nor can be biassed in favour of one in preference to another.

Having discussed the doctrinal part of this subject, I shall now conclude with two or three inferences.

Inf. 1. People then should diligently read and study the holy scriptures, in order to their knowing what to believe and what to do. As the scripture is the only rule and test of faith and obedience, let us accomplish a diligent search into it, that we may understand all matters to be believed and practised in order to our salvation, and reject every dictate and every precept, come from what quarter it will, if it be not taught us in the sacred records. We are not to believe any thing to be an article of faith, or a duty that we are to perform, unless it has the sanction of the Spirit of God in the written word,

and be enjoined us by that infallible Judge. Let it then be our daily care and principal study to acquaint ourselves with the word of God, and draw from that infallible treasury all our knowledge as to faith and practice.

2. How dangerous must it be to maintain opinions and practices which are evinced to be contrary to the word of God? How hazardous must be the state of those who hold doctrines contrary to and eversive of the foundations of Christianity? Many such doctrines are taught and propagated in our day; such as the tenets of Socinians and Arians, who degrade the Son of God to the rank of a mere creature, and deny his supreme Godhead and essential glory, and impugn his satisfaction; the Arminians, who overturn the doctrine of original sin, assert free will, and stickle for the resistibility of grace, and other things eversive of the doctrine of the Bible; and others who set up creeds, confessions, and covenants of human manufacture, in the place of the infallible oracles of truth.

3. How worthy of reproof are they who make no conscience of reading the scriptures? They seldom look into them, or at most only on a sabbath-day, without giving attention to what they read; and so are grossly ignorant of the first principles of religion.

4. Religion, if it be of the right sort, will be practical religion. A blind obedience, or ignorant obedience, to some of the duties of religion is no better than bodily exercise, which profiteth little. All right obedience flows from a principle of faith in the heart. True faith will always be productive of, and accompanied with good works. And it is in vain for men to say they have religion, unless they abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God. Let us then shew our faith by our works, in having a respect unto all the commands of God, and doing whatsoever he has enjoined us in his word.

THE SCRIPTURES THE BOOK OF THE LORD, AND THE DILIGENT STUDY AND SEARCH THEREOF RECOMMENDED AND URGED

ISAIAH 34:16.—Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.

HAVING considered the divine authority of the holy scriptures, and their scope, I come now to recommend unto you the diligent study and search of these sacred oracles, from the text now read.

In the former part of this chapter, there are most terrible threatenings denounced against the enemies of God and his church, which receive not their full accomplishment till the last day, as appears from ver. 4, 10. In the text there is the confirmation of the whole. And therein we have,

1. An intimation that all shall be accomplished according to the word. Wherein two things are to be observed.

(1.) The study of the word required. Where we may notice, (1.) The honourable epithet given to it, The book of the Lord. Thus the holy scripture is called, as being of divine original and authority, God himself being the author of it. It is true, that in Isaiah's days, even the canon of the Old Testament was not completed, some of the historical books, and of the prophetical too, not being then written. But the body of the doctrine of the word was comprised in the law, or five books of Moses; and what was afterwards written, was but a building on that foundation, by enlargement, explication, and application. And this prophecy looking as far as the end of the world, the Spirit of God might here have an eye to the complete canon of the Old and New Testament. [2.] The study of it recommended, Seek out

of it. The word signifies to inquire, search, seek out; and imports diligence and earnestness in consulting a thing to learn from it. And so it is emphatically pointed, to denote a vehemency and intenseness of spirit in the study. It does in a great measure answer that word, Acts 17:11—Searched the scriptures. We are not only to seek from it, but out of it, or, as the Hebrew signifies, from in it, or, as in the Greek, to it, and seek from it. [3.] The way to study, read it. Do not satisfy yourselves to hear it, but read it with your own eyes. For the eye makes ordinarily deeper impression than the ear.

(2.) The accomplishment in the most minute circumstance. [1.] Whereas the Lord had named a great many horrible creatures that should possess the dwellings of his enemies, none of them shall fail, they shall all be there. [2.] Whereas he had said they should have their mates, that so their kinds might be continued there, none of them shall want their mate for that purpose.

2. The confirmation or reason of this accomplishment according to the word. And it hath two parts, namely, that he has spoken the one, and will effectuate the other.

(1.) Himself has spoken the word: My mouth it hath commanded. His truth is engaged for its accomplishment. He has commanded, not these creatures, but the word or book, as Psal. 105:8.—The word he commanded: and God is said to command his word, for that he gives it as a lawgiver, of supreme authority. And so this answers to the first part of the intimation.

(2.) He will effectuate the thing in accomplishment of the word: His spirit will gather these creatures. So his power is engaged to make it forthcoming. There seems to be here a remarkable change of the persons. But I am mistaken if the mouth of the Lord be not one of the names of Christ in the scripture: Thus, Isa. 62:2.—'Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.' Jer. 23:16. 'They speak—not out of the mouth of the Lord.' Compare John 1:18. 'No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son,

which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' Heb. 1:1, 2. 'God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.' And so the words run very plainly and exactly according to the original, For my mouth he hath commanded, and his Spirit it hath gathered them.

Two doctrines naturally arise from the words, viz.

DOCT. I. 'The holy scripture is the book of the Lord.'

DOCT. II. 'The scripture is a book to be read, carefully, and diligently searched, consulted, and sought into.'

As it is the last of these doctrines I mainly intend to discourse upon, I shall be very brief in the illustration of the first: and though some things to be spoken upon it interfere with what has been already delivered, I hope it will tend to your establishment in the truth, and the more endear the holy scripture to you.

DOCT. I. 'The holy scripture is the book of the Lord.'

All I intend upon this head is to shew,

I. In what respects the holy scripture is the book of the Lord.

II. That it is so.

III. Make a short improvement.

I. My first province is to shew in what respects the holy scripture is the book of the Lord.

1. The Lord is the subject-matter of that book, as the book of the wars of the Lord. It is the commendation of a book, that it treats of a noble subject; and this book treats of God, the great scope of it being to show what God is, and what his will is. Hence we are commanded to

'hold fast the form of sound words,' 2 Tim. 1:13. If we would know God, and our duty to him, we must turn to this book and learn it.

2. The Lord is the author of it, 2 Tim. 3:16. 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God.' And who was fit to make a book on that noble subject but himself? John 1:18 forecited. It is the product of his own unerring Spirit, and so his own book in a most proper sense. It is for this reason that it is called 'the book of the Lord.' It is true, several hands were employed in the writing of it; but yet all and every part of it was from the Lord.

(1.) The motion to write was from the Lord, by a particular impulse on the spirits of the holy penmen, which influenced them to the work, and carried them on it, 2 Pet. 1:21. 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' Sometimes they had particular express calls, but they had always this motion powerfully determining and inclining them to the work.

(2.) The matter of their writing was from him. He laid it to their hands, 2 Tim. 3:16. 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God.' Some things were matters of pure revelation, that could not be known otherwise; such as things past, whereof there was no manner of record, things to come, things without the reach of men's knowledge, as the thoughts of others. These things they had by immediate suggestion. Some things they might have by other records, their own judgment, or memory. In these the Spirit of the Lord infallibly guided them what to chuse and refuse, strengthened their judgment and memories, so that they could not mistake, John 16:13. 'The Spirit of truth—will guide you into all truth.'

(3.) The very words they wrote were from him. Since the apostles spoke the very words of the Holy Ghost, much more did they write them, 1 Cor. 2:13. And therefore God is said to speak by and in the holy penmen, 2 Sam. 23:2. Luke 1:70. Acts 1:16. He did not give them the matter to put in their own words, but put the words in their hearts too, but in a manner suited to their native style. And truly it is

hard to conceive how the inspiration of the holy scriptures could reach the end without it, seeing so much depends on the suitable expressing of matter.

II. I proceed to shew, that the holy scripture is the book of the Lord. This is evident from many things, of which I shall only observe a few.

1. This book discovers what no mortal could ever have done, and nowise could be had but by divine revelation, as the history of the creation, what was done before man was on the earth, the sublime mysteries of the Trinity, of the incarnation of the Son of God, and the eternal counsels of God concerning man's salvation.

2. The perfect holiness of the doctrine. It commands all holiness, forbids all impurity in heart and life, under the pain of damnation: which shews it could neither be the work of men, being so far above their reach, and cross to their corrupt nature; nor of evil angels, being so opposite to Satan's kingdom; nor of good ones, who could never have put a cheat on the world, making their own words pass for God's.

3. The efficacy of the doctrine in its searching and convincing the conscience, Heb. 4:12.; converting souls from their most beloved lusts, even when nothing can be expected from the world for such a change, Psal. 19:7.; rejoicing the heart under the deepest distresses, ver. 8. This is not from any virtue in the letters or syllables, but from the Spirit, whose instrument it is.

4. The miracles wherewith it has been confirmed. These were wrought to confirm the doctrine, Mat. 9:6. These are God's seal, which he will never put to a lie.

5. Lastly, There is an inward sensation of this in the spirits of those that have their senses exercised. For it is not to be doubted, but as the works of God bear the marks of a divine hand, so his word also does. And while there are such manifest differences betwixt one voice and another of men, how can it be thought, but the voice of God has

a peculiar signature on it? If that be not discerned by others, it is by his own people that know his voice.

I shall now make a short improvement of this point.

USE 1. For information. It informs us, that,

1. The scripture is the best of books. They who heard Christ, said, 'Never man spake like this man;' and they that see the true glory of the scriptures must own, never did any write like these writings. There we have the true picture of the great Author, in spotless holiness; there the revelation of his mind with respect to our salvation. Whatever other books there be in the world relating to our salvation; they are but dim tapers lighted at this burning lamp.

2. They are enemies to God that are enemies to the scriptures, whether in their principles, as Papists and others, or in their practices. For if men loved God, they would love his word, Psal. 119:97. And men, by their relish of the word, may know what case their souls are in. For according as they relish the scriptures, so is it with their souls. If they have lost the gust of them, it is evident that either they have no grace, or that it is not in exercise.

3. Wo to those whom the Bible condemns; and these are all wicked men and hypocrites, whatever their stations or professions be. But happy they whom it approves and justifies; and these are all the sincere seekers of God. Seek to be of the number of the latter, and then none of the woes denounced in God's word shall fall upon you.

USE II. Of exhortation.

1. Let us highly prize this book for the sake of the Author. The Ephesians thought that they had good ground to be zealous for the image of Diana, because they fancied it fell down from Jupiter, Acts 19:35. Our Bible is a book really come from God; let us be ashamed we do not prize it more, by using it diligently to the ends for which it was given the church.

2. Let us believe it in all the parts thereof; the commands, that we may study to conform ourselves to them; the promises, that we may thereby be encouraged to a holy life; and the threatenings, that we may thereby be deterred from sin. Alas! though we own it to be the word of God, that we are no more moved with it than if it were the word of man, and such a man as we give little credit to. For compare the lives of the most part with it they say, it is but idle tales.

3. Let us submit our souls to it, as the oracles of the living God. He is the great Lawgiver, and in that book he speaks: let us own his authority in his word, and submit to it as the rule of our faith and life, without disputing or opposing.

4. Lastly, Let us study to be well acquainted with it, and make it our business to search the scriptures. This brings me to the main thing I intend.

DOCT. II. "The scripture is a book to be read, carefully and diligently searched, consulted, and sought into."

If ye ask, by whom this is to be done? it is by all into whose hands, by the mercy of God, it comes. Some never had it, and so they will not be condemned for slighting it, Rom. 2:12. Magistrates are called to look into it, and be much conversant in it, Josh. 1:8. 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayst observe to do according to all that is written therein.' Deut. 17:18, 19. 'And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them.' Ministers are in a special manner called to the study of it, 1 Tim. 4:13. 'Give attendance to reading.' 2 Tim. 3:16, 17. 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' But not they only are so

commanded, but all others within the church, John 5:39. 'Search the scriptures.' Deut. 6:6, 7. 'These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.'

In discoursing further from this point, I shall,

I. Explain this seeking into the book of the Lord.

II. Give the reasons of the doctrine.

III. Make application.

I. I am to explain this seeking into the book of the Lord. And here I will shew,

1. What is presupposed in this seeking.

2. What is the import of a studious inquiry into the scriptures.

FIRST, I am to shew what is presupposed in this seeking into the book of the Lord. It presupposes,

1. That man has lost his way, and needs direction to find it, Psal. 119:176. 'I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant.' Miserable man is bemisted in a vain world, which is a dark place, and has as much need of the scriptures to direct him, as one has of a light in darkness,' 2 Pet. 1:19. What a miserable case is that part of the world in that want the Bible? They are vain in their imaginations, and grope in the dark, but cannot find the way of salvation. In no better case are those to whom it has not come in power.

2. That man is in hazard of being led farther and farther wrong. This made the spouse say, 'Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why

should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?' There it a subtle devil, a wicked world, corrupt lusts within one's own breast, to lead him out of the right way, that we had need to give over, and take this guide. There are many false lights in the world, which, if followed, will lead the traveller into a mire, and leave him there.

3. That men are slow of heart to understand the mind of God in his word. It will cost searching diligently ere we can take it up, John 5:39. Our eyes are dim to the things of God, our apprehensions dull, and our judgment is weak. And therefore, because the iron is blunt, we must put too the more strength. We lost the sharpness of our sight in spiritual things in Adam; and our corrupt wills and carnal affections, that savour not the things of God, do more blind our judgments: and therefore it is a labour to us to and out what is necessary for our salvation.

4. That the book of the Lord has its difficulties which are not to be easily solved. Therefore the Psalmist prays, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law,' Psal. 119:18. Philip asked the eunuch, 'Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?' There are depths there wherein an elephant may swim, and will exercise the largest capacities, with all the advantages they may be possessed of. God in his holy providence has so ordered it, to stain the pride of all glory; to make his word the liker himself, whom none can search out to perfection, and to sharpen the diligence of his people in their inquiries into it.

5. That we need highly to understand it, otherwise we would not be bidden search into it. 'Of the times and seasons (says the apostle), ye have no need that I write unto you;' and therefore he wrote not of them. There is a treasure in this field; we are called to dig for it; for tho' it be hid, yet we must have it, or we will pine away in our spiritual poverty.

6. Lastly, That we may gain from it by diligent inquiry. The holy humble heart will not be always sent empty away from these wells of salvation, when it plies itself to draw. There are shallow places in these waters of the sanctuary, where lambs may wade.

SECONDLY, I proceed to shew what is the import of a studious inquiry into the scriptures. This holds out the matter and manner of the duty.

First, As for the matter of the duty; it lies in three things.

1. We should be capable to read the scriptures distinctly. Alas! How shall they study the book of God that cannot so much as read it? Isa. 29:12. It is sad to think that there are among Christians who call God their Father, and cannot read his testament; who say they would be at heaven, and yet cannot consult the directions for the way. And if their parents have neglected to teach them, they have not the grace to make up that by their own industry. Their case is little better that cannot read it distinctly; for without that there can be little benefit got by it. Neh. 8:8.

2. We should acquaint ourselves with the letter of the scriptures, the histories, prophecies, precepts, &c. This Timothy is commended for, 'that from a child he had known the holy scriptures,' 2 Tim. 3:15. That is the sacred field where the treasure lies; the blessed body, where the soul of the scripture lodgeth; the words wherein the mind of God towards sinners is held forth, Mat. 13:52.

3. We ought to labour to understand the mind of God in them, and that savingly and spiritually. Wisdom lies in the book of the Lord; and see what course we should take to get at it, Prov. 2:4, 5. 'If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord; and find the knowledge of God.' To read the scriptures just for reading's sake, without labouring to understand what ye read, is very unprofitable work. Nay we should search narrowly till we find the sense and meaning of

what we read, as one that digs deep, breaks the clods of earth, till he finds the golden ore.

Secondly, As to the manner of the duty; it imports,

1. A high esteem of the treasure to be found in the book of the Lord, Matth. 13:44. People will not be at the pains to seek into what they do not value. If men did not prize gold, they would not rip up the bowels of the earth for it. It is the undervaluing of the scriptures that makes people so little to study and seek into them.

2. A design of spiritual profit by the scripture. No wise man will be at pains but to gain thereby. And he that would aright study the holy scriptures, must design his soul's advantage thereby. We should come to the reading of the book of the Lord, as to a soul-feast, Psal. 119:131; as to the gathering of spoil after battle, Psal. 119:162. Some read the scriptures to furnish their heads with notions of the things of religion, and their tongues with talk about them; but read ye for holiness to your hearts, and to rule your walk thereby. Some read them to support their errors, and some for matter of jest and drollery; which are horrible work. But 'search ye the scriptures: for in them ye will find eternal life; and they are they that testify of Christ,' John 5:39.

3. A serious application of the heart to the work; for it will not be a by-hand work, Psal. 1:2. In the scriptures God speaks to us, as in prayer we speak to God; and when God speaks, we should listen attentively. The angels pry into scripture-mysteries, 1 Pet. 1:12. So should we into the scriptures, James 1:25.

4. Painfulness in the study. Silver and gold are not to be gathered up by every lazy passenger from the surface of the earth, as stones are, but must with labour be digged out of the bowels of it, Prov. 2:4 forecited. This is the gate of heaven; and there must be striving to get in at it. It is not easy to overcome a dark, carnal, hard heart, which unfits us for the study of the scriptures. And indeed many get but

little advantage by their reading it; for dig they cannot, and beg they will not; and therefore they go empty from these wells of salvation.

5. Diligence and constancy, 1 Pet. 1:10. It is the hand of the diligent that maketh rich in all cases, while drowsiness cloaths a man with rags. See the duty of a Christian with respect to the word, Psal. 1:2. 'His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' He suffers not his Bible to gather dust.

Lastly, A thorough search. We should go through every leaf of the book of the Lord, and endeavour to acquire the knowledge of the whole scriptures. For 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,' 2 Tim. 3:16. Some never read all the Bible in their days, but pick out portions here and there only. Searchers do not so, but look into every corner. And we should labour to know more and more of what we have some insight into: for this Bible says one, contains a puncheon that hitherto has not been pierced.

II. The next general head is, to give the reasons of the point, that the book of the Lord should be read, carefully and diligently searched, consulted, and sought into.

1. Because the way of salvation is to be found only therein, John 5:39 forecited. This is the star risen in a dark world, to guide us where Christ is. All the researches of the wise men of the world, all the inventions of men, can never guide us to Immanuel's land, John 1:18. 'No man has seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' Here, and here only, the counsels of God touching man's salvation are discovered. And so, as salvation is the most necessary thing, the study of the scriptures is the most necessary exercise. To slight it, is to judge ourselves unworthy of eternal life.

2. It is the only rule of our faith and lives, Isa. 8:20. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,' Eph. 2:20. 'Ye are built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone,' Rev. 22:18, 19. 'I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.' The Bible is the pattern shewn on the mount, to which our faith and lives must be conformed, if we would please God. The Lord says to us, as Deut. 28:14. 'Thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand or to the left.' None can walk regularly unless they observe the rule; but how can one observe it unless he know it? Matt. 22:29. God has given each of us our post in the world: the Bible is the book of our instructions; and shall we not study it? The lawyer studies his law-books, the physician his medical books; and shall not a Christian study the book of the Lord?

3. The Lord himself dictated it, and gave it us for that very end, 2 Tim. 3:16, 17 forecited, Rom. 5:4. 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.' And has the Spirit of the Lord written it, and will not we read it? Has he given it us to be studied by us, and will we slight it? This must be horrid contempt of God, and ingratitude to him with a witness. Whose image and superscription is this on the scriptures? Is it not the Lord's? Then take it up and read.

4. We must be judged by the scriptures at the great day, John 12:48. That is one of the books opened, Rev. 20:12. This is the book of the Lord's laws and ordinances, by which he will proceed in absolving or condemning us. I own God will go another way to work with those who never had the Bible, Rom. 2:12. But know thou, that seeing it is in the country where thou livest, though thou never readest a letter of

it, thou must be judged by it. Is there not good reason then for reading the scriptures?

III. I proceed now to the practical improvement of this important subject.

USE I. Of information. It lets us see,

1. The necessity and advantage of translations of the scriptures into the vulgar languages, as I have formerly shewn.
2. The people not only may without any licence from the church-guides, but must read the scriptures, for God has commanded it. The Papists here take away the key of knowledge; for their kingdom riseth and standeth by darkness, and ignorance of the scriptures.
3. The scriptures, whatever difficulties be in them, yet are so plain in things necessary to salvation, that even the unlearned may reap advantage by reading them.

USE II. Of exhortation. I exhort one and all of you to the study of the holy scriptures, to seek out of the book of the Lord, and read. I will lay this before you in several branches, before I come to the motives.

1. Let such as cannot read, learn to read. Ye that have children, as ye tender their immortal souls, teach them to read the Bible. Remember therefore the vows taken upon you at their baptism, and the duty laid upon you by the Lord himself, Eph. 6:4. 'Fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,' 2 Tim. 3:15. Timothy from a child knew the holy scriptures. Ye who got no learning when ye were young, labour to get it now. Alas! some parents, or others that have had some when young with them, have been cruel to their souls, as the ostrich to her young. They have learned them to work, but have been at no pains to teach them to read; so have sent them out into the world a prey to the devourer's teeth, without the ordinary means of the knowledge of God. Thus they are destroyed with gross ignorance.

But will ye pity your own souls, though others did not that brought you up? And do not enter yourselves heirs to their sin, by being as negligent of yourselves as they were. Though perhaps they left you nothing to live upon, yet for a livelihood ye have done something for your bodies. And will you do nothing for your souls?

Think not it will excuse thee at the hand of God, that thou art a servant; for thy soul is in as great danger as thy master's, and ignorance of religion will destroy it, Is. 27:11. There are few but know how to improve the scarcity of servants to the raising of the fee; but will you improve it by getting it in your condition to learn to read, and seek out such families where you may have that advantage, for some such there are, like Abraham's, Gen. 18:10. Nay rather than not do it, give over service for a time, and learn.

Neither will it excuse you that now you have a family; for you have an immortal soul still, which gross ignorance of the mind of God in the scriptures will ruin eternally, 2 Thess. 1:8. And the more need you have to read the scriptures, that you have a family, that you may know the Lord's mind yourself, and teach it your family. Such an excuse will no more screen you from everlasting destruction, than covering yourself with leaves will save you from the flames of a devouring fire.

Say not you are too old now to learn. It is never out of time to learn to do well for your eternal salvation. If your eyes can serve you to learn, you ought to do it, whatever your age be. But if your sight be so far gone, that you cannot though you were ever so willing; then tremble at the thoughts of the awful judgment of God, that has taken away sight from you, that when you had it would not use it for his glory, and the good of your own soul; and humble thyself, and apply to the blood of Christ, for this thy neglect, lest it prove ruining to thee for ever. And cause others read to you, and beg the teaching of the Spirit, if so be such an old careless alighter of salvation may find mercy.

2. Let such as can read procure Bibles. I dare say one that has a love to the Bible (and that all who love the Lord have) will make many shifts ere they want one. But they must be lawful shifts: for stealing of Bibles, or keeping them up from the owners, is like a thief stealing a rope to hang himself in. But spare it off your bellies or your backs, and procure one rather than want.

3. Let such as have Bibles read them frequently, and acquaint themselves with the book of the Lord. Read them in your families morning and evening; and read them in secret by yourselves; it should be a piece of your duties in secret. Make the Bible your companion abroad and at home, in the house and in the field. It is lamentable to think how unacquainted with the Bible many are, and how little heart they have to it. Ballads and song-books get the place of the Bible with many; and many have no use for it but once in the week, on the sabbath-day, as if it were more for a shew with them than the necessity of their souls.

4. Lastly, Not only read it, but search into it, and study it, to know the mind of God therein, and that ye may do it. Be not superficial in your reading of the scriptures, but do it with application, painfulness, and diligence; using all means to read it with understanding; breaking through the surface that ye may come at the hid treasure therein. Reading as well as praying by rote is to little purpose: for a parcel of bare words will neither please God, nor edify your own souls.

I shall now give some motives to enforce this important duty of reading the scriptures.

Mot. 1. God requires it of us, he commands us to do it, John 5:39. 'Search the scriptures.' The Jews had once the scriptures committed to them; but did God design they should only have them in the temple? nay, in their houses also: Only laid up in the ark? nay, he designed another chest for them, even their hearts, Deut. 6:6, 7

formerly cited. Let the authority of God sway you, then, and as you have any regard to it, study the scriptures.

Mot. 2. Nay, the very being of the Bible among us is enough to move us to study it, seeing it is that by which we must stand or fall for ever. The proclaiming of the law publicly is sufficient to oblige the subjects; and they cannot plead ignorance, though they get not every one a copy of it. Ignorantia juris excusat neminem; for every one ought to know the rule of his duty. And sinners will be condemned by it, if they conform not to it, whether they knew it or not, John 3:19.

Mot. 3. It is an exercise very pleasing to God, so that it be done in a right manner, namely, in faith. For thereby God speaks to us, and we hear and receive his words at his mouth; and obedient ears are his delight.

1. The Spirit of God commends it. It was the commendation of the Bereans, Acts 17:11 of Apollos, chap 18:24 of Timothy, 2 Tim. 3:15. And why does the Spirit of God commend others for this, but to recommend the scriptures to us?

2. There is a particular blessing annexed to this exercise, Rev. 1:3. 'Blessed is he that readeth.' And the children of God in all ages have sucked the sap of it, while they have had sweet fellowship with God in his word, and the influences of the Spirit, to the quickening, enlightening, fructifying and comforting their souls.

Mot. 4. Consider what a great privilege it is, that we have the scriptures to read and study, at this day. If Christ had not died for our salvation, the world had never been blessed with this glorious light, but had been in darkness here, as a pledge of eternal darkness. Let us compare our case with that of others, and see our privilege.

1. Look back to the case of the church in its first age before the flood, or the time of Moses, while they had not the written word. The will of God was revealed to some of them by visions, voices, dreams, &c.; but we may say, as 2 Pet. 1:19. 'We have a more sure word of

prophecy.' But that was not the lot of all, but of a few among them; the rest behoved to learn by tradition. Now every one has alike access to the word of divine revelation.

2. Look to the case of the church under the Old Testament. In David's time there was little more than the five books of Moses written; yet how does that holy soul swell in commendation of his little Bible, when little more than the ground-work of this glorious structure was laid! Psal. 119 per tot. Take that church at her best in this respect, when the canon of the Old Testament was completed, they saw not the light of the New. Now the whole canon of the scripture is in our hands, this glorious image of God has got the finishing stroke; no more is to be added thereto for ever. The New Testament casts a light upon the types, shadows, and dark prophecies of the Old. And shall we not be sensible of our mercy?

3. But look abroad into the Pagan world at this day, in comparison of which all that know any part of the scriptures are but few, and the Bible is not heard of among them. That precious treasure is not opened to them to this day, and they can know no more of God but what they can learn from the dark glimmerings of nature's light. O may we not in some sort say, as Psal. 147:19, 20. 'He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord.'

4. Look back but a few years hence, when no Bibles were but such as were manuscript, namely, before the art of printing was found out, which was but a little before the reformation from Popery. How rare behoved they then to be! and how dear, ye may easily perceive. But now how common and easy are they to be had?

5. Look to the case of those that lived, or yet live, under Popish tyranny, where it is a crime to have or to read the Bible without a special licence. What a struggle had our reformers in this church, ere they could get allowance by the laws of the land to read the Bible in

English? And how is the Bible kept out of the people's hands to this day in Popish countries? Whereas now ye are pressed to read and study it. A New Testament was very precious in those days of Popish persecution, when one gave a cart-load of hay for a leaf of the Bible. But, alas! as one says of the French Protestants, When they burned us for reading the scriptures, we burned in zeal to be reading them; now with our liberty is bred also negligence and disesteem of God's word.

6. Lastly, Consider the many helps there are to understand the scriptures beyond what were formerly. Many have run to and fro, and knowledge that way has been increased, both by preaching and writing. And that useful exercise of lecturing, which our church has commanded to be of a large portion of scripture, is no small help. What will we be able to answer to the Lord, if this great privilege be slighted?

Mot. 5. Consider it has been the way of the people of God, to be much addicted to and conversant in the scripture. So true is it that wisdom is justified of her children. O take heed ye go forth by the footsteps of the flock, and ye will not find them in the way of slighting, but prizing the word of God. Consider,

1. Ye shall find the saints highly prizing the word, Psal. 19 & 119 what large commendations of the word are there! How sweet was it to Jeremiah! chap. 15:16. 'Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.' Peter, who heard the voice on the mount, yet prefers the scriptures to voices from heaven, 2 Pet. 1:19. Paul speaks highly of it, 2 Tim. 3:16. 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' The martyrs highly prized it, and ventured their lives for it. One cast away at sea, and swimming for his life on a mast, having five pounds, which was all his stock, in the one hand, and a Bible in the other, and being obliged to let go one of them, kept the Bible, and let the five pounds go.

2. Ye shall find them much addicted to the study of the word. It was David's companion and bosom oracle, Psal. 119:97. Daniel at Babylon searches the scriptures of the prophets, Dan. 9:2. So did the noble Bereans, Apollos, and Timothy.

3. Yea, the Spirit of God makes it the character of a godly man, Psal. 1:2. 'His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' O how rational is that! The man that is born of God has a natural desire after the word, as the child after the mother's breast, 1 Pet. 2:2. The new nature tends to communion with God; it is by the word the soul has communion with him, for thereby God speaks to us. And therefore it is a sad sign, that there are few true Christians, while there are so few that diligently ply the word.

Mot. 6. Consider the excellency of the scriptures. There is a transcendent glory in them, which whoso discerns cannot miss to hug and embrace them. To commend the Bible to you, I shall say these eight things of it.

1. It is the best of books. They may know much, ye think, that have many good books; but have ye the Bible, and ye have the best book in the world. It is the book of the Lord, dictated by unerring infinite wisdom. There is no dross here with the gold, no chaff with the corn. Every word of God is pure. There is nothing for our salvation to be had in other books, but what is learned from this. They are but the rivulets that run from this fountain, and all shine with light borrowed from thence. And it has a blessing annexed to it, a glory and majesty in it, an efficacy with it, that no other book has the like. Therefore Luther professed he would burn his books he had writ, rather than they should divert people from reading the scriptures.

2. It is the greatest and most excellent of the works of God to be seen in the world, Psal. 138:2. If the world beautified with sun, moon, and stars, be as a precious ring, the Bible is the diamond in the ring. The sparkling stars, and that glorious globe of light the sun, yet leave but a dark world, where there is no Bible. Were it put to the choice of the

saints, either to put the sun out of the firmament, or the Bible out of the world, they would chuse the former, but never the latter; for that they cannot want till they go there where they shall read all in the face of Jesus. For that mast needs be most excellent that has most of God in it.

3. It is the oracles of God, Rom. 3:2. This was the chief of the Jewish privileges, without which their temple, altar, &c. would have been but dumb signs. The Pagan world did highly reverence and prize the devil's oracles: but we have God's oracles, while we have the scriptures that manifest to us the secrets of heaven. And if we discern aright who speaks in them, we must say, The voice of God, and not of man. Here is what you may consult safely in all your doubts and darknesses; here is what will lead you into all truth.

4. It is the laws of heaven, Psal. 19:7. The Lord and King of heaven is our great Lawgiver, and the laws are written in this book. It concerns us to study it. Hence we must prove our title to heaven, the blessed inheritance, or we will never obtain it. From thence the sentence of our justification must be drawn, else we are still in a state of wrath. Here is the rule we must follow, that we may please God here; and from this book shall the sentence of our absolution or condemnation be drawn at the great day.

5. It is Christ's testament and latter-will, 1 Cor. 11:25. Our Lord has died, and he has left us this Bible as his testament; and that makes his children have such an affection to it. Herein he has left them his legacy, not only moveables, but the eternal inheritance; and his last will is now confirmed, that shall stand for ever without alteration. So all the believer's hopes are in this Bible, and this is the security he has for all the privileges he can lay claim to. This is his charter for heaven, the disposition by which he lays claim to the kingdom. And therefore, if ye have any interest in the testament, ye must needs not be slighers of it.

6. It is the sceptre of his kingdom, Psal. 110:2 and it is a sceptre of righteousness. It is by this word he rules his church, and guides all his children in their way to the land that is far off. Wherever he hath a kingdom, he wields it; and the nations subjecting themselves to him, receive it. And where he rules one's heart, it has place there too, Col. 3:16. It is a golden sceptre of peace, stretched forth to rebels to win them by offering them peace; to fainting believers, to give them peace. And whosoever will not subject themselves to it, shall be broken with his rod of iron.

7. It is the channel of influences, by which the communications of grace are made, and the waters of the sanctuary flow into the soul, Isa. 59 ult. The apostle appeals for this to the experience of the Galatians, chap 3:2. 'Received ye the Spirit by the law, or by the hearing of faith?' Is the elect soul regenerated? the word is the incorruptible seed, whereof the new creature is formed, 1 Pet. 1:23. Is faith begotten in the heart? it is by the word, Rom. 10:17. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' Is the new creature to be nourished, strengthened, quickened, actuated, &c.? Christ is the fountain, faith the mouth of the soul, the word the pipes of conveyance, whereat faith must suck, as the child at the nipples.

8. Lastly, It is the price of blood even the blood of Christ, 1 Cor. 11:25. Had not the personal Word become flesh, and therein died to purchase redemption for us, we had never seen this written word among us. For it is the book of the covenant which is founded on the blood of the Mediator. It is the grant and conveyance of the right to the favour of God, and all saving benefits to believers; for which there could have been no place had not Christ died. And they that slight it, will be found to tread under foot the blood of the covenant.

Mot. 7. Consider the usefulness of the word. If we consider the Author, we may be sure of the usefulness of the work. The apostle tells us, that it alone is sufficient to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, 2 Tim. 3:16, 17. There is no case a soul can be in, but it is suitable to their case, that desire to

make use of it. To commend it to you from its usefulness, I will say these eight things.

1. It is a treasure to the poor, and such are we all by nature, Rev. 3:17, 2 Cor. 4:7. Therefore the Lord bids us search the scriptures, in allusion to those that search in mines for silver and gold. If the poor soul search here, receiving the word by faith, he is made up. He shall find there the discharge of his debt, a new right and title to the mortgaged inheritance. This word of the Lord is a treasure,

(1.) For worth. People make not treasures of any but valuable things. There is nothing in the scriptures but what is highly valuable. There are the eternal counsels of God touching our salvation; life and immortality brought to light; there are the purest percepts, the most awful threatenings, and the most precious promises, 2 Pet. 1:4, &c.

(2.) For variety. In the scriptures shines the manifold wisdom of God. They that nauseate this book of the Lord, because they find not new things in it after some time perusing it, discover their senses not to be exercised to discern. For should we come to it ever so often, bringing fresh affections with us, we would find fresh entertainment there; as is evident by the glorious refreshment sometimes found in a word, that has been often gone over before without any thing remarkable. And truly the saints shall never exhaust it while here; but as new discoveries are made in it in several ages, so it will be to the end.

(3.) For abundance. There is in it not only for the present, but for the time to come, Isa. 42:23. There is abundance of light, instruction, comfort, &c. and what is needful for the saints travelling heavenward, Psal. 119:162. And indeed it is the spoil to be gathered by us. Our Lord having fought the battle against death and devils, here the spoil lies to be gathered by us that remained at home when the fight was.

(4.) Lastly, For closeness. This word contains the wisdom of God in a mystery. It is a hid book to most of the world, and indeed a sealed book to those that remain in their natural blindness. Nor can we get into the treasure without the illumination of the same Spirit which dictated it, 1 Cor. 2:10. There is a path here which the vulture's eye hath not seen, which the carnal eye cannot take up, ver. 14. Therefore have we need to seek diligently, and pray, as Psal. 119:18. 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law.'

2. It is life to the dead: 'The words that I speak unto you (says Christ), they are spirit, and they are life,' John 6:63. We are naturally dead in sins; but the word is the means of spiritual life. It is the ordinary means of conversion, Psal. 19:7. 'The law of the Lord—converteth the soul;' and of regeneration, 1 Pet. 1:23. 'Being born again of incorruptible seed by the word of God.' By it the soul is persuaded into the covenant, and brought to embrace Jesus Christ. For thereby the Spirit is communicated to the elect of God. Thus it is of use to bring sinners home to God, from under the power of darkness to the kingdom of his dear Son.

3. It is light to the blind, Psal. 19:8. 'The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.' It is a convincing light, to discover one's state to him, and so to rouse up the soul from its natural security. It pierces the heart as an arrow, and makes the careless sinner stand and consider his way: for it freely tells every one his faults, Jam. 1:25. And while the child of God travels through a dark world, it serves to light him the way, 2 Pet. 1:19.—'a light shining in a dark place;' and lets him see how to set down every step. Hence David says, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path,' Psal. 119:105.

4. It is awakening to those that are asleep, Cant. 7:9. It is the voice of God which is full of majesty, to awaken the sleepy Christian to the exercise of grace. For as it is the means of begetting grace in the heart, so it is also the means of actuating and quickening thereof, Psal. 119:50. 'Thy word hath quickened me.' Here the Christian may

hear the alarm sound to rise up and be doing. Here are the precious promises as cords of love to draw, and the awful threatenings to set idlers to work.

5. It is a sword to the Christian soldier, Eph. 6:17. 'The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.' Whoever has a mind for heaven must fight his way to it: for none get the crown but the conquerors, Rev. 3:21. They must go through many temptations, from the devil, the world, and the flesh; and the word is the sword for resisting them. It is an offensive and defensive weapon. We see how our Lord Jesus wielded it, Mat. 4:4, 7. 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.—It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' And whatever be our temptations, if we be well versed in the word, we may from thence bring answers to them all.

6. It is a counsellor to those who are in straits, doubts, and difficulties, Psal. 119:24. 'Thy testimonies are—my counsellors.' Many a time the children of God, when tossed with doubts and fears, have found a quiet harbour there; and have got their way cleared to them there, when they knew not what to do. And no doubt, if we were more exercised unto godliness, and looking to the Lord in our straits, we would make more use of the Bible, as the oracles of Heaven.

7. It is a comforter to those that are cast down, Psal. 119:49, 50. 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.' The way to heaven lies through many tribulations, and afflictions are the trodden path to glory. But the Lord has left his people the Bible as a cordial to support them under all their pressures from within and without. And indeed the sap of the word, and the sweetness of the promises, are never more lively relished, than when the people of God are exercised under afflictions. Then does that heavenly fountain flow most plentifully, when, created

streams being dried up, the soul goes for all to the Lord. To sum up all in one word,

8. Lastly, It is a cure for all diseases of the soul, Prov. 4:22. 'My words are—health to all their flesh.' There is no malady that a soul is under, but there is a suitable remedy for it in the word, 2 Tim. 3:16, 17 frequently quoted above, being adapted by infinite wisdom to the case of poor sinners. By it the simple may be made wise, the weak strengthened, the staggering confirmed, the hard heart melted, the shut heart opened, &c. it being the means the Spirit makes use of for these and all other such purposes.

Mot. 8. Consider the honourable epithets given to the scriptures. Amongst which I name only three.

1. The scriptures of truth, Dan. 10:21. Men may wrest the scriptures to patronise their errors, but the whole word of God is most pure truth. Here are no mistakes, no weaknesses, that adhere to all human composures. Here we may receive all that is taught us without hesitation. The hearers of men, or readers of their works, are divided into four sorts: Some like sponges, that suck up all, both good and bad: Some like sand glasses, who, what they receive at the one ear let go at the other: Some like a strainer, that lets all the good pass through, but keeps the dregs: Some like the sieve, that keeps the good grain, and lets through what is not worth. These last are only to be approved; but in the reading of the word we must be as the first sort.

2. Holy scriptures, 2 Tim. 3:15. They are the word of a holy God, from whom nothing can come but what is holy. It consists of holy commands, holy promises, holy threatenings, instructions, directions, &c. And holy hearts will love and reverence them for that very reason.

3. Lastly, The book of the Lord. What can be said more to commend it to us, if we have any regard to the Lord himself? If I could tell you

of a book that fell down from heaven, and were to be had by any means, who would not be curious to have such a book and study it? This is the book that contains the counsels of Heaven, and is given from Heaven to the church, to let men see the way to it.

Mot. last. Consider the danger of slighting the word. It exposes to sin, and consequently to the greatest danger. How can they keep the way of the word that do not study to acquaint themselves with it? They must needs walk in darkness that do not make use of the light; and this leads to everlasting darkness, John 3:19. If by this word we must be judged, how can they think to stand that neglect it?

I conclude with some directions for the study of the scriptures.

1. Keep an ordinary in reading them, that ye may be acquainted with the whole; and make this reading a part of your secret duties. Not that ye should bind up yourselves to an ordinary, so as never to read by choice, but that ordinarily this tends most to edification. Some places are more difficult, some may seem very bare for an ordinary reader; but if you would look on it all as God's word, not to be slighted, and read it with faith and reverence, no doubt ye would find advantage.

2. Set a special mark, one way or other, on those passages you read, which you find most suitable to your case, condition, or temptations; or such as ye have found to move your hearts more than other passages. And it will be profitable often to review these.

3. Compare one scripture with another, the more obscure with what which is more plain, 2 Pet. 1:20. This is an excellent means to find out the sense of the scriptures; and to this good use serve the marginal notes on Bibles. And keep Christ in your eye, for to him the scriptures of the Old Testament (in its genealogies, types, and sacrifices) look, as well as those of the New.

4. Read with a holy attention, arising from the consideration of the majesty of God, and the reverence due to him. This must be done

with attention, (1.) To the words; (2.) To the sense: and (3.) To the divine authority of the scripture, and the bond it lays on the conscience for obedience, 1 Thess. 2:13.

5. Let your main end in reading the scriptures be practice, and not bare knowledge, Jam. 1:22. Read that you may learn and do, and that without any limitation or distinction, but that whatever you see God requires, you may study to practise.

6. Beg of God and look to him for his Spirit. For it is the Spirit that dictated it, that it must be savingly understood, 1 Cor. 2:11. And therefore before you read, it is highly reasonable you beg a blessing on what you are to read.

7. Beware of a worldly fleshly mind: for fleshly sins blind the mind from the things of God; and the worldly heart cannot favour them. In an eclipse of the moon the earth comes between the sun and the moon, and so keeps the light of the sun from it. So the world, in the heart, coming betwixt you and the light of the word, keeps its divine light from you.

8. Labour to be exercised unto godliness, and to observe your case. For an exercised frame helps mightily to understand the scriptures. Such a Christian will find his case in the word, and the word will give light to his case, and his case light into the word.

9. Lastly, Whatever you learn from the word, labour to put it in practice. For to him that hath shall be given. No wonder they get little insight into the Bible, who make no conscience of practising what they know. But while the stream runs into a holy life, the fountain will be the more free.

OF GOD AND HIS PERFECTIONS

JOHN 4:24.—God is a Spirit.

SIMONIDES, a heathen poet, being asked by Hiero king of Syracuse, What is God? desired a day to think upon it; and when that day was at an end, he desired two days; and when these were past, he desired four days. Thus he continued to double the number of days in which he desired to think of God, ere he would give an answer. Upon which the king expressing his surprise at his behaviour, asked him, What he meant by this? To which the poet answered, 'The more I think of God, he is still the more dark and unknown to me.' Indeed no wonder that he made such an answer; for he that would tell what God is in a measure suitable to his excellency and glory, had need to know God even as he is known of him, which is not competent to any man upon earth. Agur puzzles the whole creation with that sublime question, What is his name? Prov. 30:4. But though it is impossible in our present state to know God perfectly, seeing he is incomprehensible; yet so much of him is revealed in the scriptures as is necessary for us to know in order to our salvation.

The text tells us, and it should be remembered, that the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, who lay in the bosom of the Father, and who only can reveal him, is here the speaker, that God is a Spirit. It is but little of the nature of spirits that we, who dwell in tabernacles of clay, are so intimately connected with flesh and blood, and so naturally impressed with sensible objects, can know. We cannot fully understand what our own spirits or souls are; and less do we know of the nature of angels, who are of a superior nature to us; and far less can we know of the spiritual nature of the Divine Being, which is utterly incomprehensible by men or angels. However, as all our ideas begin at what is infinite, in considering the nature of spirits, so we are led to conceive of God as infinitely more perfect than any finite spirit*. All we can know of spirits is,

1. That a spirit is the most perfect and excellent of beings, more excellent than the body, or any thing that is purely material.
2. That a spirit is in its own nature immortal, having nothing in its frame and constitution tending to dissolution or corruption.
3. That a spirit is capable of understanding, willing, and putting forth actions agreeable to its nature, which no other being can do.

Now these conceptions of the nature of spirits lead us to conceive of God,

1. As a being that is more perfect and excellent than all other spirits and beings. Hence he is said to be incorruptible, Rom. 1:23.; immortal and invisible, 1 Tim. 1:17. He has understanding and will; and so we conceive of him as the creator and governor of all things; which he could not be, if he were not an intelligent and sovereign spirit.
2. Though angels and the souls of men are spirits, yet their excellency is only comparative, that is, they excel the best of all material beings in their nature and properties. But God, as a spirit, is infinitely more excellent than all material beings, and all created spirits. Their perfections are derived from him; and therefore he is called 'the Father of spirits,' Heb. 12:9 and 'the God of the spirits of all flesh,' Numb. 16:22.; and his perfections are underived; and he is independently immortal. Hence it is said of him, that 'he only hath immortality,' 1 Tim. 6:16. He is an infinite spirit; and it can be said of none but him, that 'his understanding is infinite,' Psal. 147:5.

Now, a spirit is an immaterial substance, Luke 24:39.; and seeing whatever God is, he is infinitely perfect in it, he is a most pure spirit. Hence we may infer,

1. That God has no body nor bodily parts. Object. How then are eyes, ears, hands, face, and the like, attributed in scripture to God? Answ. They are attributed to him not properly, but figuratively; they are

spoken of him after the manner of men, in condescension to our weakness; but we are to understand them after a sort becoming the Divine Majesty. We are to consider what such bodily parts serve us for, as our eyes for discerning and knowing, our arms for strength, our hands for action, &c. and we are to conceive these things to be in God infinitely, which these parts serve for in us. Thus, when eyes and ears are ascribed to God they signify his omniscience; his hands denote his power, and his face the manifestation of his love and favour.

2. That God is invisible, and cannot be seen with the eyes of the body, no not in heaven; for the glorified body is still a body, and God a spirit, which is no object of the eyes, more than sound, taste, smell, &c. 1 Tim. 1:17.

3. That God is the most suitable good to the nature of our souls, which are spirits; and can communicate himself, and apply those things to them, which only can render them happy, as he is the God and Father of our spirits.

4. That it is sinful and dishonourable to God, either to make images or pictures of him without us, or to have any image of him in our minds, which our unruly imagination is apt to frame to itself, especially in prayer. For God is the object of our understanding, not of our imagination. God expressly prohibited Israel to frame any similitude or resemblance of him, and tells them, that they had not the least pretence for so doing, inasmuch as they 'saw no similitude of him, when he spake to them in Horeb,' Deut. 4:12, 15, 16. And says the prophet, 'To whom will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?' Isa. 40:18. We cannot form an imaginary idea of our own souls or spirits, which are absolutely invisible to us, and far less of him who is the invisible God, whom no man hath seen or can see. Therefore to frame a picture or an idea of what is invisible, is highly absurd and impracticable: nay, it is gross idolatry, prohibited in the second commandment.

5. That externals in worship are of little value with God, who is a spirit, and requires the heart. They who would be accepted of God must worship him in spirit and in truth, that is, from an apprehension and saving knowledge of what he is in Christ to poor sinners. And this saving knowledge of God in Christ is attainable in this life: for it is the matter of the divine promise, 'I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord,' Jer. 24:7. 'It is written in the prophets, They shall be all taught of God, John 6:45. And therefore it should be most earnestly and assiduously sought after by us, as, unless we attain to it, we must perish for ever.

That we may know what sort of a spirit God is, we must consider his attributes, which we gather from his word and works, and that two ways: 1. By denying of, and removing from God, in our minds, all imperfection which is in the creatures, Acts 17:29. And thus we come to the knowledge of his incommunicable attributes, so called because there is no shadow or vestige of them in the creatures, such as infinity, eternity, unchangeableness. 2. By attributing unto him, by way of eminency, whatever is excellent in the creatures, seeing he is the fountain of all perfection in them, Psal. 94:9. And thus we have his communicable attributes, whereof there are some vestiges and small scantlings in the creature, as being, wisdom, power, &c. amongst which his spirituality is to be reckoned.

Now, both these sorts of attributes in God are not qualities in him distinct from himself, but they are God himself. God's infinity is God himself, his wisdom is himself; he is wisdom, goodness, 1 John 1:5. Neither are these attributes so many different things in God; but they are each of them God himself: for God swears by himself, Heb. 6:13.; yet he swears by his holiness, Amos 4:2. He creates by himself, Isa. 44:24.; yet he creates by his power, Rom. 1:20. Therefore God's attributes are God himself. Neither are these attributes separable from one another; for though we, through weakness, must think and speak of them separately, yet they are truly but the one infinite perfection of the divine nature, which cannot be separated therefrom, without denying that he is an infinitely perfect being.

We have said that God is a spirit; but angels and the souls of men are spirits too. What then is the difference between them? Why, God is an infinite, eternal, and unchangeable spirit; but angels and souls are but finite, were not from eternity, and are changeable spirits. Now, these three, infinity, eternity, and immutability, are God's incommunicable attributes, which we are next to explain.

First, God is infinite. Infinity is the having no bounds or limits within which a thing is contained. God then is infinite, i. e. he is whatsoever he is without bounds, limits, or measure, Job 11:7. 'Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?' We cannot define the presence of God by any certain place, so as to say, Here he is, but not there; nor by any limits, so as to say, Thus far his being reacheth, and no further: but he is every where present, after a most inconceivable manner, even in the deepest darkness, and the closest recesses of privacy. He fills all the innumerable spaces that we can imagine beyond this visible world, and infinitely more than we can imagine.

Now God is infinite, (1.) In respect of his being: for of his nature our finite understandings cannot possibly form any adequate conception. This lies hid in rays of such bright and radiant glory, as must for ever dazzle the eyes of those who attempt to look into it. (2.) In respect of place; and therefore he is every where present: 'Can any man hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord,' Jer. 23:24. (3.) In respect of time and duration: for the ages of his eternity cannot be numbered, 'nor the number of his years searched out,' Job 36:26. (4.) In respect of all his communicable attributes. Thus the depth of his wisdom cannot be fathomed: 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' Rom. 11:33. 'His greatness is unsearchable,' Psal. 145:3. The extent-of his power cannot be reached: 'The thunder of his power who can understand?' Job 26:14. We cannot understand his powerful thunder, one of the lowest displays of his majesty in our region, much less The utmost extent

and force of his power, in its terrible effects, especially the power of his anger: 'God is great, and we know him not.' The treasures of the divine goodness cannot be inventoried: 'O how great is thy goodness (says the Psalmist), which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! The brightness of God's glory cannot be described; as a full discovery of it would quite overpower the faculties of any mortal in this imperfect state: for man is weak and unworthy of it, weak and could not bear it, guilty and could not but dread it: and therefore God 'holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth a cloud upon it, Job 26:9. With what propriety, then did he say to Moses, 'Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live!' Exod. 33:20.

That God is infinite, is evident from the natural notions and dictates of the human mind. Hence the heathens, by the light of nature, attributed this perfection to the Divine Being. Thus one philosopher pronounced him to be a circle whose centre is every where, and whose circumference is no where; which another philosopher thus expressed in clearer terms, God is included in no place, and excluded from none. Which way soever ye turn, says Seneca, ye may take notice of God meeting you; for nothing is void of him: he himself fills all his works, and is present with the whole creation. Remarkable also is the expression of the prince of Latin poets, Jovis omnia plena, 'All things are full of God.' This also appears from several passages of scripture; as Deut. 4:39. 'The Lord is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath,' 1 Kings 8:27. 'The heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee,' says Solomon in his prayer to God at the dedication of the temple. See also Psal. 139:4, &c. Jer. 23:23, 24. Again, if God were not infinite and immense, many gross absurdities would follow from the contrary notion; such as, it is inconsistent with his universal providence over the world, by which all things are preserved. 'In him we live, move and have our being,' Acts 17:27. As his providence is over all, his essence must be equally diffusive. It is inconsistent with his supreme perfection. No perfection can be wanting in God: and therefore a limited essence, which is an

imperfection, cannot be attributed to him. It is also inconsistent with his immutability: For if he move and recede from one place to another, would he not thereby be mutable? while yet 'with him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' Last of all, it would be inconsistent with his omnipotence. That God can do every thing, is a notion settled in the minds of all; and his essence cannot be less or more confined than his power, and his power cannot be thought to extend farther than his essence.

But some may be ready to say, Does not the scripture say, that God sits in heaven and dwells on high, that heaven is his throne; and does not the Lord's prayer teach us to say, Our Father which art in heaven? Now, how can this agree with his infinity or immensity? I answer, God is indeed said to sit in heaven and to dwell on high; but he is no where said to dwell only in the heavens. It is the court of his majestic presence, not the prison of his essence. There is a three-fold presence of God: A glorious presence, which is peculiar to heaven: A gracious presence, which the saints enjoy on earth: And an essential presence, which is equally and alike in all places. Others may allege, that it is a disparagement to God, to say that he is essentially present in all places and with all creatures, even on the dunghill of the earth, and in the sordid sink of hell with the devils and the damned. To this I would only say, that it is a gross misapprehension of God, and an unaccountable measuring of him by ourselves, to imagine that he is capable of being infected by any thing below. For he is a pure and spotless being. Whatever is nauseous to our senses cannot affect him. Darkness is uncomfortable to us: but the darkness and the light are all one to him. Wickedness may hurt a man; but if we multiply our transgressions, what can we do unto him? Job 35:6, 8. To deny the immensity of God, says one, because of ill-scented places, is to measure God rather by the nicety of sense, than by the sagacity of reason.

Secondly, The next incommunicable attribute of God is eternity. Hence he is called 'the King eternal.' 1 Tim. 1:17. We find other things called eternal. But the eternity of all things besides God is only their

having no end, though they had a beginning. Thus angels and the souls of men are eternal, because they shall never have an end. The covenant of grace is eternal, because the mercies of it shall last for ever. The gospel is eternal, because the effects of it shall never wear away. The redemption by Christ is eternal, for the same reason. And the last judgment is so, because the consequences will be everlasting. But the eternity of God is his being without beginning and without end, Psal. 90:2. 'From everlasting to everlasting thou art God.' He was from everlasting before time, and will remain unto everlasting when time shall be no more; without beginning of life or end of days.

Thirdly, The next incommunicable attribute of God is unchangeableness. God is immutable, that is, always the same, without any alteration. Hence it is said, Jam. 1:17. 'With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,' Mal. 3:6. 'I am the Lord, I change not.' God makes changes upon the creatures, but is liable to no change himself.' Though he alters his dispensations, yet not his nature; but, by one pure and constant act of his will and power, effects what changes he pleases. He is the same in all his perfections, constant to his intentions, steady to his purpose, unchangeably fixed and persevering in all his decrees and resolutions. When God is said to repent in scripture, Gen. 6:6. 1 Sam. 15:11. It denotes only a change of his outward conduct according to his infallible foresight and immutable will. He changes the way of his providential dealings according to the carriage and deportment of his creature, without changing his will, which is the rule of his providence. For otherwise that is an eternal truth, Num. 23:19. 'God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent,' 1 Sam. 15:29. 'The Strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent; for he is not a man, that he should repent.'

Having taken a short view of the incommunicable attributes of God, I proceed now to consider those that are called communicable, viz. his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Now these things are in the creatures indeed, but they are in them in a

finite way; but God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in these perfections, which no creature is or can be.

First, There is his being which is his nature or essence and existence, which are but one thing in God. Creatures indeed have a being, but it is only a finite being, a being that has a beginning, a changeable one, and that may have an end. But God's being is an infinite being, eternal and unchangeable. Hence he calls himself, Exod. 3:14. I AM THAT I AM. Hence we may infer,

1. That God is incomprehensible, and his essence infinite and unbounded, Psal. 145:3. 'His greatness is unsearchable.' It is not possible for a finite understanding to comprehend all that is in God; but the nature of God is a boundless ocean that hath no shore, Job 11:7. 'Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?' And though God perfectly knows himself, that is because his understanding is infinite.

2. God is omnipresent and immense. He is present every where, but bounded no where, not only in respect of his virtue or influence, but of his essence. This clearly appears from the following passages, Psal. 139:7, 8, 9, 10. 'Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? 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.' Jer. 23:23, 24. 'Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord, do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord, 1 Kings 8:27. 'Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee.' He is there where the thief is stealing, the unclean person gratifying his base lusts, &c. though they see him not, and think themselves secure when no other eyes see them.

3. There is no succession in the duration of God; for where there is not a first, there cannot be a second moment of duration; but God is

eternal: And there can be no succession of time in God's duration, if he be unchangeable; for that is a continual change. See 2 Pet. 3:8. 'One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.'

4. God is independent, or self-sufficient. His being and perfections are underived, and not communicated to him, as all finite perfections are by him to the creature. This self-existence, or independence, is one of the highest glories of the divine nature, by which he is distinguished from all creatures, who live, move, and have their being in and from him. Therefore all our springs are in him, all that we enjoy or hope for is from him; and we should be entirely devoted to his service and honour.

5. Lastly, This doctrine affords full breasts of consolation to the godly, who have an infinite, eternal, and unchangeable friend, who will never leave nor forsake them, but render them completely blessed at last, and confirm them in that happy state for ever. And here is unspeakable terror to those whose enemy this great and eternal God is; for being his enemies, and dying in their rebellion, they shall suffer the whole vengeance and wrath threatened in his word, which he liveth for ever to inflict; and he will never alter what he hath threatened. O let sinners be now persuaded to make this infinite, eternal, and unchangeable God, their friend through Jesus Christ, and so they shall infallibly escape the wrath that is to come.

Secondly, The next communicable attribute of God is wisdom. The personal wisdom of God is Christ, 1 Cor. 1:24. But this is his essential wisdom, which is that attribute of God whereby he knows himself, and all possible things, and how to dispose all things to the best ends. Hence he is said to 'know all things,' John 21:17 and to be 'God only wise,' Rom. 16:27. Now, God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his wisdom, Psal. 147:5. 'His understanding is unsearchable.'

The wisdom of God appears,

1. In the works of creation. The universe is a bright mirror wherein the wisdom of God may be clearly seen. 'The Lord by wisdom made the heavens,' Psal. 136:5. 'The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens,' Prov. 3:19. 'He hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.' More particularly, the wisdom of God appears, (1.) In the vast variety of creatures which he hath made. Hence the Psalmist cries out, 'How manifold are thy works, O Lord! in wisdom hast thou made them all,' Psal. 104:24. (2.) In the admirable and beautiful order and situation of the creatures. God hath marshalled every thing in its proper place and sphere. For instance, the sun, by its position displays the infinite wisdom of its Creator. It is placed in the midst of the planets, to enlighten them with its brightness, and inflame them with its heat, and thereby derive to them such benign qualities as make them beneficial to all mixed bodies. If it were raised as high as the stars, the earth would lose its prolific virtue, and remain a dead carcase for want of its quickening heat; and if it were placed as low as the moon, the air would be inflamed with its excessive heat, the waters would be dried up, and every planet scorched. But at the due distance at which it is placed, it purifies the air, abates the superfluities of the waters, temperately warms the earth, and so serves all the purposes of life and vegetation. It could not be in another position without the disorder and hurt of universal nature. Again, the expansion of the air from the ethereal heavens to the earth is another testimony of divine wisdom: for it is transparent and of a subtile nature, and so a fit medium to convey light and celestial influences to this lower world. Moreover, the situation of the earth doth also trumpet forth the infinite wisdom of its Divine Maker: for it is as it were the pavement of the world, and placed lowermost, as being the heaviest body, and fit to receive the weightiest matter. (3.) In fitting every thing for its proper end and use, so that nothing is unprofitable and useless. After the most diligent and accurate inquiry into the works of God, there is nothing to be found superfluous, and there is nothing defective. (4.) In the subordination of all its parts, to one common end. Though they are of different natures, as lines vastly distant in themselves, yet

they all meet in one common centre, namely, the good and preservation of the whole, Hos. 2:21, 22. 'I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel.'

2. In the government of the world. God sits in his secret place, surrounded with clouds and darkness, holding the rudder of the world in his hand, and steering its course through all the floatings and tossings of casualty and contingency to his own appointed ends. There he grasps and turns the great engine of nature, fastening one pin and loosing another, moving and removing the several wheels of it, and framing the whole according to the eternal idea of his own understanding. By his governing providence he directs all the actions of his creatures; and, by the secret and efficacious penetration of the divine influence, he powerfully sways and determines them which way he pleases.

3. In the work of redemption. This is the very masterpiece of Divine wisdom; and here shines the manifold or diversified wisdom of God, Eph. 3:10. It appears, (1.) In the contrivance thereof. When man had ruined himself by sin, all the wisdom of men and angels could never have devised a method for his recovery. Heaven seemed to be divided upon this awful event. Mercy inclined to save man, but Justice interposed for satisfaction. Justice pleaded the law and the curse, by which the souls of sinners are forfeited to vengeance. Mercy, on the other hand, urged, Shall the Almighty build a glorious work, and suffer it to lie in eternal ruins? shall the most excellent creature in the inferior world perish through the subtilty of a malicious and rebellious spirit? shall that arch-rebel triumph for ever, and raise his trophies from the final ruin of the works of the Most High? Shall the reasonable creature lose the fruition of God, and God lose the subjection and service of his creature? and, shall all mankind be made in vain? Mercy further pleaded, That if the rigorous demands of Justice be heard, it must lie an obscure and unregarded attribute in the divine essence for ever; that it alone must be excluded, while

all the rest of the attributes had their share of honour. Thus the case was infinitely difficult, and not to be unravelled by the united wit of all the celestial spirits. A bench of angels was incapable to contrive a method of reconciling infinite mercy with inflexible justice, of satisfying the demands of the one, and granting the requests of the other. In this hard exigence the wisdom of God interposed, and in the vast treasure of its incomprehensible light, found out an admirable expedient to save man without prejudice to the other divine perfections. The pleas of Justice, said the wisdom of God, shall be satisfied in punishing, and the requests of Mercy shall be granted in pardoning. Justice shall not complain for want of punishment, nor Mercy for want of compassion; I will have an infinite sacrifice to content Justice, and the virtue and fruit of that sacrifice shall delight mercy. Here justice shall have punishment to accept, and Mercy shall have pardon to bestow. My Son shall die, and satisfy justice by his death; and by the virtue and merit of that sacrifice sinners shall be received into favour, and herein Mercy shall triumph and be glorified. Here was the most glorious display of wisdom. (2.) In the ordination of a Mediator every way fitly qualified to reconcile men unto God. A mediator must be capable of the sentiments and affections of both the parties he is to reconcile, and a just esteemer of the rights and injuries of the one and the other, and have a common interest in both. The Son of God, by his incarnation, perfectly possesses all these qualities. He hath a nature to please God, and a nature to please sinners. He had both the perfections of the Deity, and all the qualities and sinless infirmities of the humanity. The one fitted him for things pertaining to God, and the other furnished him with a sense of the infirmities of man.—This union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ was necessary to fit and qualify him for the discharge of his threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King.—As a Prophet, it was requisite he should be God, that so he might acquaint us with his Father's will, and reveal the secret purposes and hidden counsels of heaven concerning our salvation, which were locked up in the bosom of God from all eternity. And it was needful he should be man, that he might converse with poor sinners in a familiar manner, and convey the mind and counsels of

God to them, in such a way as they could receive them.—As a Priest, he behoved to be a man, that so he might be capable to suffer, and to bear the wrath which the sins of the elect had justly deserved. And it behoved him to be God, to render his temporary sufferings satisfactory. The great dignity and excellency of the divine Mediator's person made his sufferings of infinite value in God's account. Though he only suffered as a man, yet he satisfied as God.—As a King, he must be God, to conquer Satan, convert an elect world, and effectually subdue the lusts and corruptions of men. And he must be man, that by the excellency of his example, he might lead us in the way of life. (3.) In the manner whereby this redemption is accomplished, namely, by the humiliation of the Son of God. By this he counteracted the sin of angels and men. Pride is the poison of every sin: for in every transgression the creature prefers his pleasure to and sets up his own will above God's. This was the special sin of Adam. The devil would have levelled heaven by usurpation. He said in his heart, I will be like the Most High; and man infected with his breath (when he said, Ye shall be like gods) became sick of the same disease. Now, the Divine Redeemer, that he might cure our disease in its source and cause by the quality of the remedy, applied to our pride an unspeakable humility. Man was guilty of the highest robbery in affecting to be equal with God; and the Son, who was in the bosom of God, and equal to him in majesty and authority, emptied himself by assuming the human nature in its servile state, Phil. 2:6, 7, 8. It is said, John 1:14. 'The word was made flesh.' The meanest part of our nature is specified to signify the greatness of his abasement. There is such an infinite distance between God and flesh, that the condescension is as admirable as the contrivance. So great was the malignity of human pride, that such a profound humility was requisite for the cure of it. And by this Christ destroyed the works of the devil. (4.) In appointing such contemptible, and in appearance opposite means, to bring about such glorious effects. The way is as admirable as the work. Christ ruined the devil's empire by the very same nature that he had vanquished, and by the very means which he had made use of to establish and confirm it. He took not upon him the nature of angels, which is equal to Satan in strength and

power; but he took part of flesh and blood, that he might the more signally triumph over that proud spirit in the human nature, which was inferior to his, and had been vanquished by him in paradise. For this end he did not immediately exercise omnipotent power to destroy him, but managed our weakness to foil the roaring lion. He did not enter the lists with Satan in the glory of his Deity, but disguised under the human nature which was subject to mortality. And thus the devil was overcome in the same nature over which he first got the victory. For as the whole race of mankind was captivated by him in Adam the representative, so believers are made victorious over him by the conquest which their representative obtained in the whole course of his sufferings. As our ruin was effected by the subtlety of Satan, so our recovery is wrought by the wisdom of God, who takes the wise in their own craftiness. Thus eternal life springs from death, glory from ignominy, and blessedness from a curse. We are healed by stripes, quickened by death, purchased by blood, crowned by a cross, advanced to the highest honour by the lowest humility, comforted by sorrows, glorified by disgrace, absolved by condemnation, and made rich by poverty. Thus the wisdom of God shines with a radiant brightness in the work of redemption.

I shall conclude this point with a few inferences.

1. God is omniscient; 'he knows all things,' John 21:17. 'All things are naked and open to him,' Heb. 4:13. His eye sees us wherever we are. Even future contingencies, as well as the most necessary things are known to him. This is beautifully described by the Psalmist, Psal. 139:1–10 which deserves your serious perusal.

2. His knowledge of all things is not conjectural, but infallible, Rom. 11:33, 34. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, who hath been his counsellor?' There is nothing to him contingent or uncertain; but every thing falls out exactly according to his foreknowledge and predetermination.

3. It is altogether independent on the creature, whose motions and operations were known to him from eternity, and are all regulated by his counsel.

4. Lastly, To this wise God we may safely entrust all our concerns, knowing he will manage them all so as to promote his own glory and our real good.

Thirdly, The next communicable perfection of God is power, whereby he can do whatever he pleases, and whatsoever is not repugnant to his nature, Jer. 32:17. 'Ah, Lord God, behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth, by thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.' He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in power; which the scripture holds forth, 1. Positively, Gen. 17:1. 'I am the Almighty God.' 2. Negatively, Luke 1:37. 'With God nothing shall be impossible.' 3. Comparatively, Matt. 19:26. 'With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.'

The power of God appears,

1. In the creation of the world, Rom. 1:20. 'For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.' O how great must that power be, which produced the beautiful fabric of the universe, without the concurrence of any material cause! This proclaims it to be truly infinite: for nothing less could make such distant extremes as nothing and being to meet together. All this was done by a word, one simple act of his will; for 'he spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast,' Psal. 33:9.

2. In the preservation of the world, and all things therein. He 'upholdeth all things by the word of his power,' Heb. 1:3. He preserves all the creatures in their proper place, for their proper use and end. It is by the Divine Power that the heavenly bodies have constantly rolled about in their spheres for so many ages, without wearing or moving out of their proper course; and that the

tumultuous elements have persisted in their order to this very day. He preserves the confederacies of nature, sets bounds to the raging sea, and keeps it within its limits by a girdle of sand. He is the powerful preserver of man and beast. He preserves them in their kind and species, by the constant succession of them one after another; so that, though the individuals perish, yet the species continues. O what a mighty power must that be that sustains so many creatures, sets bounds to the raging sea, holds the wind in his fists, and preserves a comely order and sweet harmony among all the creatures!

3. In the government of the world. He is the supreme Rector of the universe, and manages all things, so that they contribute to the advancement of his own glory, and the advantage of his people. By his governing providence he directs all the actions and motions of his creatures, and powerfully determines them which way soever he pleases. All the creatures are called his host, because he marshals them as an army to serve his important purposes. The whole system of nature is ready to favour and act for men when he commands it, and it is ready to punish them when he gives it a commission. Thus he checked the Red Sea, and it obeyed his voice, Psal. 106:9. Its rapid motion quickly ceased, and the fluid waters were immediately ranged as defensive walls to secure the march of his people. At the command of God, the sea again recovered its wonted violence, and the watery walls came tumbling down upon the heads of the proud Egyptian oppressor and his host. The sea so exactly obeyed its orders, that not one Israelite was drowned, and not one Egyptian was saved alive. More particularly, the power of God appears in the moral government of the world.

(1.) In governing and ordering the hearts of men, so that they are not masters of their own affections, but often act quite contrary to what they had firmly resolved or proposed. Of which we have eminent instances in Esau and Balaam. He hath the hearts of all men in his hands, and can turn them what way he pleases. Thus he bent the hearts of the Egyptians to favour the Israelites, by sending them

away with great riches given them by way of loan. He turned Jehoshaphat's enemies from him when they came with a purpose to destroy him, 2 Chron. 18:31.

(2.) In governing and managing the most stubborn creatures, as devils and wicked men. (1.) In his governing devils. They have great power, and are full of malice. The devil is always going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. We could have no quiet nor safety in the world, if his power were not restrained, and his malice curbed by one that is mightier than the infernal fiend. He would turn all things upside down, plague the world, burn cities and houses, and plunder us of all the supports of life, if he were not held in a chain by the Omnipotent Governor of the world. But God overmasters his strength, so that he cannot move one hair's breadth beyond his tether. God has all the devils chained, and he governs all their motions. The devil could not touch Job in his person and goods without the divine permission; nor could he enter into the Gadarene swine without a special licence. If we consider the great malice of these invisible enemies, and the vast extent of their power, we will easily see that there could be no safety or security for men, if they were not curbed and restrained by a superior power. (2.) In governing wicked men. All the imaginations of their hearts are evil, and only evil continually. They are fully bent upon mischief, and drink iniquity like water. What unbridled licentiousness and headstrong fury would triumph in the world, and run with a rapid violence, if the Divine Power did not interpose to bear down the flood gates of it? Human society would be rooted up, the whole world drenched in blood, and all things would run into a sea of confusion, if God did not bridle and restrain the lusts and corruptions of men. The king of Assyria triumphed much in his design against Jerusalem; but how did God govern and manage that wild ass! Isa. 37:29. 'I will put my hook into thy nose, (says Jehovah), and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.' And we are told, Psal. 76:10 that 'the very wrath of man shall praise him, and that he will restrain the remainder of wrath.'

(3.) In raising up a church to himself in spite of all his enemies. This is specially seen in founding the New Testament church, and propagating the gospel through the world. The power of God appears admirable in planting the gospel, and converting the world to Christianity. For there were many and great difficulties in the way, as gross and execrable idolatry; and the nations were strongly confirmed and rooted in their idolatry, being trained up and inured to it from their infant state. It was as hard to make the Gentiles forsake the religion which they received from their birth, as to make the Africans change their skin, and the leopard his spots. The Pagan religion was derived from their progenitors through a long succession of ages. Hence the heathens accused the Christian religion of novelty, and urged nothing more plausibly than the argument of immemorial prescription for their superstition. They would not consider whether it was just and reasonable, but with a blind deference yielded up themselves to the authority of the ancients. The pomp of the Pagan worship was very pleasing to the flesh; the magnificence of their temples, adorned with the trophies of superstition, their mysterious ceremonies, their music, their processions, their images and altars, their sacrifices and purifications, and the rest of the equipage of a carnal religion, drew their respects and strongly affected their minds through their senses. Whereas the religion of the gospel is spiritual and serious, holy and pure, and hath nothing to move the carnal part. There was then an universal depravation of manners among men; the whole earth was covered with abominations: the most unnatural lusts had lost the fear and shame that naturally attends them. We may see a melancholy picture of their most abandoned conversation, Rom. 1. The powers of the world were bent against the gospel. The heathen philosophers strongly opposed it. When Paul preached at Athens, the Epicureans and Stoics entertained him with scorn and derision; 'What will this babbler say?' said they. The heathen priests conspired to obstruct it. The princes of the world thought themselves obliged to prevent the introduction of a new religion, lest their empire should be in hazard, or the greatness and majesty of it impaired thereby. If we consider the means by which the gospel was propagated, the

Divine Power will evidently appear. The persons employed in this great work were a few illiterate fishermen, with a publican and a tent-maker, without authority and power to force men to obedience, and without the charms of eloquence to enforce the belief of the doctrines which they taught. Yet this doctrine prevailed, and the gospel had wonderful success through all the parts of the then known world, and that against all the power and policy of men and devils. Now, how could this possibly be, without a mighty operation of the power of God upon the hearts of men?

(4.) In preserving, defending, and supporting his church under the most terrible tempests of trouble and persecution which were raised against her. This is promised by our blessed Saviour, Matth. 16:18. 'The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' The most flourishing monarchies have decayed and wasted, and the strongest kingdoms have been broken in pieces; yet the church hath been preserved to this very day, notwithstanding all the subtle and potent enemies which in all ages have been pushing at her. Yea, God has preserved and delivered his church in the greatest extremities, when the danger in all human appearance was unavoidable; as in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in Esther's days, when a bloody decree was issued to slay all the Jews. Yea, God hath sometimes delivered his church by very weak and contemptible-like instruments, such as Moses, a fugitive from Egypt, and Aaron, a poor captive in it; and sometimes by very unlikely means, as when he smote Egypt with armies of locusts and lice. In all ages of the world God has gloriously displayed his power in the preservation of his church and people, notwithstanding all the rage, power, and malice of their enemies.

(5.) In the conversion of the elect. Hence the gospel, which is the means and instrument of conversion, is called the power of God, and the rod of his strength, and the day of the success of the gospel in turning sinners to Christ, is called the day of his power, Psal. 110:3. O what a mighty power must that be that stills the waves of a tempestuous sea, quells the lusts and stubbornness of the heart, demolishes the strong holds of sin in the soul, routs all the armies of

corrupt nature, and makes the obstinate rebellious will strike sail to Christ! The power of God that is exerted here makes a man to think on other objects, and speak in another strain, than he did before. O how admirable is it, that carnal reason should be thus silenced; that legions of devils should be thus driven out; and that men should part with those sins which before they esteemed their chiefest ornaments, and stand at defiance with all the charming allurements and bitter discouragements of the world? The same power that raised Christ from the grave is exerted in the conversion of a sinner. Eph. 1:19, 20. There is greater power exerted in this case than there was in the creation of the world. For when God made the world, he met with no opposition; he spake the word, and it was done: but when he comes to convert a sinner, he meets with all the opposition which the devil and a corrupt heart can make against him. God wrought but one miracle in the creation: he spake the word and it was done; but there are many miracles wrought in conversion. The blind is made to see, the dead raised, and the deaf hears the voice of the Son of God. O the infinite power of Jehovah! In this work the mighty arm of the Lord is revealed.

(6.) In preserving the souls of believers amidst the many dangers to which they are exposed, and bringing them safely to glory at last. They have many enemies without, a legion of subtle and powerful devils, and a wicked and ensnaring world, with all its allurements and temptations; and they have many strong lusts and corruptions within; and their graces are but weak, and in their infancy and minority, while they are here: So that it may justly be matter of wonder how they are preserved. But the apostle tells us, that they 'are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation,' 1 Pet. 1:5. Indwelling corruption would soon quench grace in their hearts, if it were not kept alive by a divine power. But Christ hath pledged his faithfulness for it, that they shall be kept secure, John 10:28. It is his power that moderates the violence of temptations, supports his people under them, defeats the power of Satan, and bruises him under their feet.

4. Lastly, The power of God appears gloriously in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ. Hence in scripture Christ is called the power as well as the wisdom of God. This is the most admirable Work that ever God brought forth in the world. More particularly,

(1.) The power of God shines in Christ's miraculous conception in the womb of a virgin. The power of the Highest did overshadow her, Luke 1:35 and by a creative act framed the humanity of Christ of the substance of the virgin's body, and united it to the Divinity. This was foretold many ages before as the effect of the divine power. When Judah was oppressed by two potent kings, and despaired of any escape and deliverance to raise their drooping spirits, the prophet tells them, that he would give them a sign; and a wonderful one it was. Therefore it is said 'Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,' Isa. 7:14. The argument is from the greater to the less: For if God will accomplish that stupendous and unheard-of wonder, much more will he rescue his people from the fury of their adversaries.

(2.) In uniting the divine and human nature in the person of Christ, and that without any confusion of the two natures, or changing the one into the other. The two natures of Christ are not mixed together, as liquors that incorporate with one another, when poured into the same vessel. The divine nature is not turned into the human, nor the human into the divine. One nature doth not swallow up another, and make a third distinct from both. But they are distinct, and yet united; conjoined, and yet unmixed: the properties of each nature are preserved entire. O what a wonder of power was here! that two natures, a divine and a human, infinitely distant in themselves, should meet together in a personal conjunction! Here one equal with God is found in the form of a servant; here God and man are united in one; the Creator and the creature are miraculously allied in the same subsistence. Here a God of unmixed blessedness is linked personally with a man of perpetual sorrows. That is an admirable expression, 'The Word was made flesh,' John 1:14. What can be more miraculous than for God to become man, and man to become God?

that a person possessed of all the perfections and excellencies of the Deity should inherit all the infirmities and imperfections of humanity, sin only excepted? Was there not need of infinite power, to bring together terms which were so far asunder? Nothing less than an omnipotent power could effect and bring about what an infinite and incomprehensible wisdom did project in this matter.

(3.) In supporting the human nature of Christ, and keeping it from sinking under the terrible weight of divine wrath that came upon him for our sins, and making him victorious over the devil and all the powers of darkness. His human nature could not possibly have borne up under the wrath of God and the curse of the law, nor held out under such fearful contests with the powers of hell and the world, if it had not been upheld by infinite power. Hence his Father says concerning him, Isa. 42:1. 'Behold my servant whom I uphold.'

(4.) The divine power did evidently appear in raising Christ from the dead. The apostle tells us, that God exerted his mighty power in Christ when he raised him from the dead, Eph. 1:19. The unlocking the belly of the whale for the deliverance of Jonah, the rescue of Daniel from the den of lions, and restraining the fire from burning the three children, were signal declarations of the divine power, and types of the resurrection of our Redeemer. But all these are nothing to what is represented by them: for that was a power over natural causes, and curbing of beasts and restraining of elements; but in the resurrection of Christ, God exercised a power over himself, and quenched the flames of his own wrath, that was hotter than millions of Nebuchadnezzar's furnaces: he unlocked the prison doors wherein the curses of the law had lodged our Saviour, stronger than the belly and ribs of a leviathan. How admirable was it, that he should be raised from under the curse of the law, and the infinite weight of our sins, and brought forth with success and glory after his sharp encounter with the powers of hell! in this the power of God was gloriously manifested. Hence he is said to be raised from the dead 'by the glory of the Father,' i. e. by his glorious power; and 'declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead,'

Rom. 1:4. All the miraculous proofs by which God acknowledged him for his Son during his life, had been ineffectual without this. If he had remained in the grave, it had been reasonable to believe him only an ordinary person, and that his death had been the just punishment of his presumption in calling himself the Son of God. But his resurrection from the dead was the most illustrious and convincing evidence, that really he was what he declared himself to be.

I shall conclude, on this point, with a few inferences.

1. God is omnipotent; that is, can do all things. It is true he cannot lie nor deny himself, for these are repugnant to his nature, and argue not power, but weakness and imperfection.

2. God's power never acts to its utmost extent. He can do more always than he either doth or will do, Matt. 3:9. He can do all things possible; but he only doth what he hath decreed to be done, Mat. 26:53, 54.

3. Hence we may be confirmed in our belief of the resurrection. Some are ready to reckon it a thing impossible, that there can be a recollection of the dispersed particles of men's bodies when they are dissolved into dust, and scattered into the four winds. But if we consider the power of God, this will abundantly answer all that can be objected against this truth. Hence saith the apostle, Acts 26:8. 'Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?' And saith our Saviour to the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, 'Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.' Almighty power can meet with no let or bar. Unless the particles of men's bodies could be scattered beyond the reach of Almighty power, and grinded so small as to escape the knowledge and care of God, this dispersion can make nothing against the faith and possibility of the resurrection.

4. Is God of infinite power? then all his promises shall be most certainly accomplished, whatever difficulties may be in the way thereof. For God is able to bring to pass whatever he has promised to his people. Therefore difficulty or improbability should never discourage or weaken our faith, because the power of God is infinite.

5. They are absolutely sure of salvation who are kept by the power of God; for God is able to keep them from falling, and his power is engaged for their preservation. They are surrounded with and infolded in the arms of Omnipotence; their souls are in safe custody, being committed unto Christ, from whose hands none can pluck them.

6. We to those against whom the power of God is set; for 'they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, 2 Thess. 1:9. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Consider this, O ye sinners, and flee from the wrath that is to come.

7. Abuse not the power of God, by limiting it, as Israel did in the wilderness, Psal. 78:19 by trusting to an arm of flesh, as too many are apt to do, more than to the God of power, Jer. 17:5 or by fearing the wrath of man, who can only kill the body, and not dreading the displeasure of Almighty God, Isa. 51:12, 13.

8. Lastly, Improve the power of God by faith, depending upon it for the performance of all his gracious promises towards you and the church; for 'he can work, and who shall let it?' for strength to resist and vanquish, sin, Satan, and the world, saying, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' and for grace to enable you to the performance of every commanded duty, saying with the apostle, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me.'

Fourthly, The next communicable attribute of God that falls to be considered is holiness, which is the absolute purity of his nature, whereby he delights in whatever is agreeable to his holy will, and in

the resemblance of it that is in the creatures. Or, it is the perfect rectitude and integrity of the divine essence, whereby in all that he doth he acts like himself and for himself, delighting in whatever is agreeable to his will and nature, and abhorring whatever is contrary thereto. Hence he is said to be 'glorious in holiness,' Exod. 15:11. And 'he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity,' Hab. 1:13. And he is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in holiness. Hence the heavenly host proclaim, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts,' Isa. 6:3.

Now, God is, (1.) Necessarily holy. Not only he will not, but he cannot look on iniquity. His holiness is not only an act of his will, but belongeth to his essence. (2.) He is essentially holy. Holiness is the essential glory of the divine nature; yea, it is his very essence. Holiness in men is an accessory quality and superadded gift, and is separable from the creature. But in God his essence and his holiness are the same. He could as soon cease to be God, as cease to be holy. (3.) He is perfectly holy. The best saints on earth are but holy in part; there is still a mixture of sin in them while here. But, 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all,' 1 John 1:5. (4.) He is universally holy; holy in all that he is, in all that he hath, and in all that he doth. He is holy in his name, in his nature, in his word, and in his works. (5.) He is originally holy. Angels and men are made holy; but God is holy of himself, and he is the original spring of all the holiness that is in the creatures (6.) He is exemplarily holy. The holiness of God is the example and pattern of all the holiness that is in the creatures. Hence we are required to 'be holy as God is holy,' 1 Pet. 1:16. (7.) He is perpetually and unchangeably holy. The best men on earth may change to the worse; they may grow less holy than they are; but God is immutable in his holiness. He cannot grow more holy than he is, because he is infinitely holy, and his holiness is incapable of any addition. Nor can he grow less holy than he is, because then he would cease to be God.

The holiness of God is manifested and discovered,

1. In his word; and that both in the precepts and promises thereof, God manifested his hatred and detestation of sin even in a variety of sacrifices under the ceremonial law; and the occasional washings and sprinklings upon ceremonial defilements, which polluted only the body, were a clear proof, that every thing that had a resemblance to evil was loathsome to God. All the legal sacrifices, washings, and purifications, were designed to express what an evil sin is, and how hateful and abominable it is to him. But the holiness of God is most remarkably expressed in the moral law. Hence the law is said to be holy, Rom. 7:12. It is a true transcript of the holiness of God. And it is holy in its precepts. It requires an exact, perfect, and complete holiness in the whole man, in every faculty of the soul, and in every member of the body. It is holy in its prohibitions. It forbids and condemns all impurity and filthiness whatsoever. It discharges not only sinful words and actions, gross and atrocious crimes, and profane, blasphemous, and unprofitable speeches, but all sinful thoughts and irregular motions of the heart. Hence is that exhortation, Jer. 4:14. 'O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?' It is holy in its threatenings. All these have their fundamental root in the holiness of God, and are a branch of this essential perfection. All the terrible threatening annexed to the law are declarations of the holiness and purity of God, and of his infinite hatred and detestation of sin.

Again, the holiness of God appears in the promises of the word. They are called holy promises, Psal. 105:42 and they are designed to promote and encourage true holiness. Hence says the apostle, 2 Cor. 7:1. 'Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.' By them we are 'made partakers of a divine nature,' 2 Pet. 1:4.

2. The holiness of God is manifested in his works. Hence the Psalmist saith, 'The Lord is holy in all his works' Psal. 145:17. More particularly,

(1.) The divine holiness appears in the creation of man. Solomon tells us, Eccl. 7:29 that 'God made man upright;' and Moses says, that he was 'made after the image of God,' Gen. 1:27. Now, the image of God in man consists chiefly in holiness. Therefore the new man is said to be 'created after God in righteousness and true holiness,' Eph. 4:24. Adam was made with a perfection of grace. There was an entire and universal rectitude in all its faculties, disposing them to their proper operations. There was no disorder among his affections, but a perfect agreement between the flesh and the spirit; and they both joined in the service of God. He fully obeyed the first and great command, of loving the Lord with all his soul and strength, and his love to other things was regulated by his love to God. When Adam dropt from the creating finger of God, he had knowledge in his understanding, sanctity in his will, and rectitude in his affections. There was such a harmony among all his faculties, that his members yielded to his affections, his affections to his will, his will obeyed his reason, and his reason was subject to the law of God. Here then was a display of the divine purity.

(2.) In the works of Providence; Particularly in his judicial proceedings against sinners for the violation of his holy and righteous laws. All the fearful judgments which have been poured down upon sinners, spring from God's holiness and hatred of sin. All the dreadful storms and tempests in the world are blown up by it. All diseases and sicknesses, wars, pestilence, plagues, and famines, are designed to vindicate God's holiness and hatred of sin. And therefore, when God had smitten the two sons of Aaron for offering strange fire, he says, 'I will be sanctified in them that draw nigh me, and before all the congregation I will be glorified,' Lev. 10:3. He glorified himself in declaring by that act, before all the people, that he is a holy God, that cannot endure sin and disobedience. More particularly,

[1.] God's holiness and hatred of sin is clearly manifested in his punishing the angels that sinned. It is said, 2 Pet. 2:4. 'God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered

them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.' Neither their mighty numbers, nor the nobility of their natures, could incline their offended Sovereign to spare them; they were immediately turned out of heaven, and expelled from the divine presence. Their case is hopeless and helpless; no mercy will ever be shewn to one of them, being under the blackness of darkness for ever.

[2.] In the punishment threatened and inflicted on man for his first apostasy from God. Man in his first state was the friend and favourite of heaven; by his extraction and descent he was the Son of God, a little lower than the angels; consecrated and crowned for the service of his Maker, and appointed as king over the inferior world; he was placed in paradise, the garden of God, and admitted to fellowship and communion with him. But sin hath divested him of all his dignity and glory. By his rebellion against his Creator, he made a forfeiture of his dominion, and so lost the obedience of the sensible creatures, and the service of the insensible. He was thrust out of paradise, banished from the presence of God, and debarred from fellowship and communion with him. God immediately sentenced him and all his posterity to misery, death, and ruin. This is a clear demonstration of the infinite purity and holiness of God. But blessed be God, for Jesus Christ, the second Adam, who hath restored that which the first Adam took away.

[3.] In executing terrible and strange judgments upon sinners. It was for sin that God drowned the old world with a deluge of water, rained hell out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and made the earth open her mouth, and swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. It was for sin that God brought terrible destroying judgments upon Jerusalem. All calamities and judgments spring from this bitter root, as sword, pestilence, distempers of body, perplexities of mind, poverty, reproach, and disgrace, and whatever is grievous and afflictive to men. All this shows how hateful sin is to God.

[4.] In punishing sins seemingly small with great and heavy judgments. A multitude of angels were sent down to hell for an

aspiring thought, as some think. Uzzah, a good man, was struck dead in a moment for touching the ark; yea, fifty thousand Beth-shemites were smitten dead for looking into it. We are apt to entertain slight thoughts of many sins: but God hath set forth some as examples of his hatred and abhorrence of sins seemingly small, for a warning to others, and a testimony and demonstration of his exact holiness.

[5.] In bringing heavy afflictions on his own people for sin. Even the sins of believers in Christ do sometimes cost them very dear. He will not suffer them to pass without correction for their transgressions. Though they are exempted from everlasting torments in hell, yet they are not spared from the furnace of affliction here on earth. We have instances of this in David, Solomon, Jonah, and other saints. Yea, sometimes God in this life, punishes sin more severely in his own people than in other men. Moses was excluded from the land of Canaan but for speaking unadvisedly with his lips, though many greater sinners were suffered to enter in. Such severity towards his own people is a plain demonstration, that God hates sin as sin, and not because the worst men commit it.

[6.] In sentencing so many of Adam's posterity to everlasting torments for sin. That an infinitely good God, who is goodness itself, and delights in mercy, should adjudge so many of his own creatures to the everlasting pains and torments of hell, must proceed from his infinite holiness, on account of something infinitely detested and abhorred by him.

3. The holiness of God appears in our redemption by Jesus Christ. Here his love to holiness and his hatred of sin is most conspicuous. All the demonstrations that ever God gave of his hatred of sin were nothing in comparison of this. Neither all the vials of wrath and judgment which God hath poured out since the world began, nor the naming furnace of a sinner's conscience, nor the groans and roarings of the damned in hell, nor that irreversible sentence pronounced against the fallen angels, do afford such a demonstration of the

divine holiness, and hatred of sin, as the death and sufferings of the blessed Redeemer. This will appear, if ye consider,

(1.) The great dignity and excellency of his person. He was the eternal and only begotten Son of God, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Yet he must descend from the throne of his majesty, divest himself of his robes of insupportable light, take upon him the form of a servant, become a curse, and bleed to death for sin. Did ever sin appear so hateful to God as here? To demonstrate God's infinite holiness, and hatred of sin, he would have the most glorious and most excellent person in heaven and earth to suffer for it. He would have his own Son to die on a disgraceful cross, and be exposed to the terrible flames of divine wrath, rather than sin should live, and his holiness remain for ever disparaged by the violations of his law.

(2.) How dear he was to his Father. He was his only begotten Son, he had not another; the only darling and the chief delight of his soul, who had lain in his bosom from all eternity. Yet as dear as he was to God, he would not and could not spare him, when he stood charged with his people's sins. For saith the apostle, Rom. 8:32. 'God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.' As he spared him not in a way of free bounty, giving him freely as a ransom for their souls! so he spared him not in a way of vindictive justice, but exacted the utmost mite of satisfaction from him for their sins.

(3.) The greatness of his sufferings. Indeed the extremity of his sufferings cannot be expressed. Insensible nature, as if it had been capable of understanding and affection, was disordered in its whole frame at his death. The sun forsook his shining, and clothed the whole heavens in black; so that the air was dark at noon-day, as if it had been midnight. The earth shook and trembled, the rocks were rent asunder, and universal nature shrank. Christ suffered all that wrath which was due to the elect for their sins. His sufferings were equivalent to those of the damned. He suffered a punishment of loss: for all the comforting influences of the Spirit were suspended for a

time. The divine nature kept back all its joys from the human nature of Christ, in the time of his greatest sufferings. We deserved to have been separated from God for ever; and therefore our Redeemer was deserted for a time. There was a suspension of all joy and comfort from his soul, when he needed it most. This was most afflicting and cutting to him, who had never seen a frown in his Father's face before. It made him cry out with a lamentable accent, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Again, he suffered a punishment of sense, and that with respect to both his body and soul. The elect had forfeited both soul and body to divine vengeance; and therefore Christ suffered in both. The sufferings of his body were indeed terrible. It was filled with exquisite torture and pain. His hands and his feet, the most sensible parts were pierced with nails. His body was distended with such pains and torments as when all the parts are out of joint. Hence it is said of him, Psal. 22:14, 15. 'I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels, my strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me unto the dust of death.' Now, thus did the Son of God suffer. His pure and blessed hands, which were never stretched out but to do good, were pierced and rent asunder: and those feet which bore the Redeemer of the world, and for which the very waters had a reverence, were nailed to a tree. His body which was the precious workmanship of the Holy Ghost, and the temple of the Deity was destroyed. But his bodily sufferings were but the body of his sufferings. It was the sufferings of his soul that was the soul of his sufferings. No tongue can tell you what he endured here. When all the comforting influences of the Spirit were suspended, then an impetuous torrent of unmingled sorrows broke into his soul. O what agonies and conflicts, what sharp encounters, and distresses did he meet with from the wrath of God that was poured out upon him! He bore the wrath of an angry God, pure wrath without any alloy or mixture, and all that wrath which was due to the elect through all eternity for their innumerable sins. Sin was so hateful to God, that nothing could expiate it, or satisfy for it, but the death and bitter agonies of his dear Son.

(4.) Consider the cause of his sufferings. It was not for any sin of his own, for he had none, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. They were made his only by a voluntary susception, by taking his people's sins upon him. And though they were only imputed to him, yet God would not spare him. So that there is nothing wherein the divine holiness and hatred of sin is so manifest as in the sufferings of his own dear Son. This was a greater demonstration thereof than if all men and angels had suffered for it eternally in hell-fire.

IT remains now to shut up this point with a few inferences.

1. Hence see the great evil of sin. It strikes against the divine holiness, which is the peculiar glory of the Deity; so that it is not only contrary to our own interest, but to the very nature of God. All sin aims in general at the being of God, but especially at the holiness of his being. There are some sins that strike more directly against one divine perfection, and some against another; but all sins agree together in their enmity against the holiness of God. Hence, when Sennacherib's sin is aggravated, the Holy Spirit takes the rise from this perfection, 2 Kings 19:22. 'Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.' God cannot but hate that which is directly opposite to the glory of his nature, and the lustre and varnish of all his other perfections. Now, what an horrid evil must that be which is so contrary to the holy nature of God, and which is infinitely detested and abhorred by him?

2. Hence see the excellency of true gospel-holiness. Holiness is the glory and beauty of God, and the glory of the heavenly angels; and therefore it must be the glory of men and women, that which makes them truly glorious. In this respect the king's daughter is said to be all glorious within. The church is glorious, because she is holy. Hence Christ sanctifies and cleanses it, that he may present it to himself a glorious church, Eph. 5:25, 26. Holiness is the image of God in the rational creature. The more holy one is, the more like is he to God.

This is our chief excellency. Man's original glory and happiness consisted in this; and the excellency of angels above devils lies in this. Holiness hath a self-evidencing excellency in it. There is such a beauty and majesty in it, as commands an acknowledgment of it from the consciences of all sorts of knowing men.

3. God can have no gracious communion with unholy sinners: 'For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?' 2 Cor. 6:14. It is simply impossible that an infinitely holy God should embrace vile polluted sinners that are not washed from their filthiness. They can have no fellowship with him here or hereafter. God will not give impure sinners one good look; for 'he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity,' Hab. 1:13. All communion is founded on union, and union upon likeness. But what likeness is there between a holy God and vile polluted creatures? Therefore they can never expect to have any communion with him, unless they be made clean. Hence they are directed to this, in order to their communion with God, Jam. 4:8. 'Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.' 2 Cor. 6:17, 18. 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.'

4. The best of saints, who have attained the highest degrees, and made the greatest improvements in holiness and purity, may be ashamed in the presence of an infinitely holy God; for they are far short of that holiness which God requires, and all the purity they have attained is sadly tinged with impurity. It had this effect upon the evangelical prophet, when he had a vision of the holy God. Isa. 6:5. 'Wo is me,' says he, 'for I am undone, because I am 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.'

5. Despisers of holiness are despisers of God. For holiness is the glory of God, and that in which he delights above all things. For men, therefore, to despise holiness in the saints, and to make a mock of their holy lives and practices, is a high contempt of the holy God, who will highly resent such a great indignity done him.

6. There is no access to God without a Mediator. 'For our God is a consuming fire,' Heb. 12:29, and our sin hath made us as stubble fully dry. He is infinitely pure and holy, and we are vile filthy creatures; so that it is quite impossible for us to have any access to him, or communion with him, on our own account. We have all reason to cry out, as 1 Sam. 6:20. 'Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?' There is no standing before him without a Mediator. The spots and blemishes of our best duties cannot be hid from the eyes of his holiness. He cannot accept of a righteousness lower than that which bears some suitableness to the holiness of his nature: but even our highest obedience and best righteousness does not in any degree suit the divine holiness: and therefore it cannot challenge any acceptance with God. The righteousness of Christ, being the righteousness of God, a perfect and unspotted righteousness, is that wherein alone the holiness of God can acquiesce, and is the foundation of all access to God, and communion with him.

7. Is God infinitely and necessarily holy, so that he cannot but hate sin? then how admirable is the patience of God towards this land, and the generation wherein we live? How much sin and wickedness abounds amongst us? Alas! all kinds of sin wofully prevail at this day among all ranks and degrees of persons, high and low, rich and poor, noble and ignoble; all have corrupted their way. Sins of a heinous nature are to be found among us, such as bid God defiance; horrid blasphemies, hideous oaths, vile adulteries, cruel oppressions, contempt of religion, and gross profanation of the Lord's day. Add to all these, ingratitude, worldliness, pride, and self-conceit among such as are more eminent for a profession of religion. All these are committed under a clear gospel-light, after signal mercies and deliverances, against the most solemn covenant engagements,

personal and national, and against manifold rebukes and warnings from the word and providence of God. And alas! how are these sins increased and multiplied? Who can compute the number of the sins which one profane wretch is guilty of? But what are these to the sins of a whole city? and what are the sins of a whole city to the sins of the whole nation? Who can compute the number of the sins which Scotland is guilty of in one day? But what are these to the sins which have been committed for a great many years past? Ah! we are a people deeply laden with iniquity. O what matter of admiration is here, that God bears so long with us! His holiness and purity renders his patience the more astonishing. O the riches of his forbearance towards us! Admire it and adore it, and praise and bless him for it; and beware of abusing it, by taking liberty to go on in sin, because of it. Such an amazing patience, if abused, will render our judgment the more severe.

8. Lastly, Be exhorted to make a suitable improvement of the holiness of God, by fleeing to Jesus Christ, whose perfect righteousness alone can make you acceptable to God, and whose Spirit can sanctify and cleanse you; by giving thanks at the remembrance of the divine holiness, by proclaiming the glory thereof; and by studying holiness in all manner of life and conversation.

Fifthly, The next communicable attribute of God that falls under our consideration is his justice, which is the perfect rectitude of his nature, whereby he is infinitely righteous and equal, both in himself, and in all his dealings with his creatures, Deut. 32:4. 'Just and right is he.' God is just to himself in acting in all things agreeable to his nature and perfections. All his actions are such as become such a pure and holy being as he is. He cannot do any thing that is contrary to the perfection of his nature: he cannot lie nor deny himself. He is just to himself in maintaining his own glory, and his divine rights and prerogatives; for he will not give his glory to another. And he is just towards his creatures in all his dealings with them, particularly

with man. Here God may be considered, 1. As a sovereign Lord; and, 2. As supreme governor and Judge of the world.

(1.) As sovereign Lord. And so he hath a right to do with his own what he will. He may order and dispose of all the creatures according to his pleasure, Dan. 4:35. We are all in his hand as clay in the hand of the potter. He hath a sovereign and absolute right to use and dispose of us according to his own pleasure, to set bounds to our habitation, carve out our lot in the world, and set us high or low, in prosperity or adversity, as he pleaseth. It is so also, as to his dispensations of grace. He may give grace to whom he will, and withhold it from whom he will; and what he wills in that matter is just and right, because he wills it.

(2.) As supreme Governor and Judge of the world. And so he is just in governing his rational creatures in a way agreeable to their nature, according to a law which he has given them. His justice in this character is either legislative or executive.

(1.) There is a legislative justice, which is that whereby he gives most just and righteous laws to his creatures, commanding and forbidding what is fit for them in right reason to do and forbear. 'For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our king, the Lord is our lawgiver,' Isa. 33:22. Man being a reasonable creature, capable of moral government, therefore, that God might rule him according to his nature, he hath given him a law, confirmed by promises of reward, to draw him by hope, and by threatenings of punishment to deter him by fear. Hence Moses tells the Israelites, that he had 'set before them life and good, and death and evil' Deut. 30:15 and that he had 'set before them life and death, blessing and cursing,' ver. 19.

(2.) There is God's executive justice, called also by some his judicial justice, by others his distributive justice. In this respect he is just in giving every one his due, and in rendering unto all men according to their works, without respect of persons. This executive justice of God is either remunerative or afflictive.

(1.) There is a remunerative or rewarding justice. God is just in rewarding the righteous. Psal. 58:11. 'Verily there is a reward for the righteous.' The saints shall not serve him for nought. Though they may be losers for him, yet they shall not be losers by him, Heb. 6:10. 'God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.' He bountifully rewards his people's obedience, and their diligence and faithfulness in his service. Hence David says, Psal. 18:20. 'The Lord rewardeth me according to my righteousness.' Sometimes he rewards them with temporal blessings: for godliness hath the promise of this life, as well as that which is to come. Sometimes Providence doth notably interpose, and load obedience with blessings here in the world, to the conviction of all beholders, so that men are constrained to say, 'Verily there is a reward for the righteous.' But however he do as to outward things, yet he rewards his people with inward blessings. There are fresh supplies and influences of grace, near and intimate communion with him, sweet manifestations of his favour and love, intimations of peace and pardon, and joy and peace in believing, &c. Even 'in keeping his commandments there is great reward,' Psal. 19:11. And he rewards them with eternal blessings, 2 Thess. 1:7. Now, this reward is not of debt but of grace. It doth not imply any merit, but is free and gratuitous. It is not because they deserve it, but because Christ has merited it, and God has graciously promised it.

(2.) There is an afflictive justice. God is just in all the afflictions and troubles which he brings upon his creatures; because he always punishes sinners by a law. The violations of his holy and righteous laws make them obnoxious to his judgments. Sometimes God sends afflictions upon people to chastise and correct them for their sins. Now, all the troubles of believers are of this kind: for as many as he loves, he rebukes and chastens. Some of their afflictions are intended to reduce them from their strayings. Hence says David, 'Before I was afflicted I went astray,' and, 'It was good for me that I was afflicted.' Indeed God chuseth some in the furnace of affliction. The hot furnace is God's work-house wherein he sometimes formeth vessels of honour. Manasseh is an eminent instance of this. Many that were

never serious before, are brought to consider their ways in their affliction. Sometimes God takes vengeance on wicked men for their sins and disobedience to his laws: and this is called vindictive justice, Rom. 3:5, 6 which is essential to the nature of God, and is not merely an effect of his will. He cannot let sin go unpunished. He not only will not, but he cannot acquit the wicked. But more of this afterwards.

The justice of God is manifested and discovered,

1. In the temporal judgments which he brings upon sinners even in this life. The saints own this, Neh. 9:33. 'Thou art just in all that is brought upon us.' The end and design of all God's judgments is to witness to the world, that he is a just and righteous God. All the fearful plagues and terrible judgments which God has brought upon the world, proclaim and manifest his justice.

2. In sentencing so many of Adam's posterity to everlasting pains and torments for sin, according to that dreadful sentence which shall be pronounced at the last day, Matth. 25:41. 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' If you could descend into the bottomless pit, and view the pains and torments of hell, and hear the terrible shrieks and roarings of the damned wallowing in these sulphureous flames, you could not shun to cry out, O the severity of divine justice! Though they are the works of God's own hands, and roar and cry under their torments, yet they cannot obtain any mitigation of their pains, nay, not so much as one drop of water to cool their tongues. That an infinitely good and gracious God, that delights in mercy, should thus torment so many of his own creatures, O how incorruptible must his justice be!

3. In the death and sufferings of Christ. God gave his beloved Son to the death for this end, that it might be known what a just and righteous God he is. So the apostle shews us, Rom. 3:25. 'Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness,' &c. He set him forth in garments rolled in

blood, to declare his justice and righteousness to the world. After man turned rebel, and apostatised from God, there was no way to keep up the credit and honour of divine justice, but either a strict execution of the law's sentence, or a full satisfaction. The execution would have destroyed the whole race of Adam. Therefore Christ stepped in, and made a sufficient satisfaction by his death and sufferings, that so God might exercise his mercy without prejudice to his justice. Thus the blood of the Son of God must be shed for sin, to let the world see that he is a just and righteous God. The justice of God could and would be satisfied with no less. Hence it is said, Rom. 8:32. 'God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all.' If forbearance might have been expected from any, surely it might from God, who is full of pity and tender mercy: yet God in this case spared him not. If one might have expected sparing mercy and abatement from any, surely Christ might most of all expect it from his own Father; yet God spared not his own Son. Sparing mercy is the lowest degree of mercy; yet it was denied to Christ, when he stood in the room of the elect. God abated him not a minute of the time appointed for his sufferings, nor one degree of the wrath which he was to bear. Nay, though in the garden, when Christ fell on the ground, and put up that lamentable and pitiful cry, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;' yet no abatement was granted to him. The Father of mercies saw his dear Son humbled in his presence, and yet dealt with him in extreme severity. The sword of justice was in a manner asleep before, in all the terrible judgments which had been executed on the world, but now it must be awakened and roused up to pierce the heart of the blessed Redeemer. Hence it is said, Zech. 13:7. 'Awake O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd.' If divine justice had descended from heaven in a visible form, and hanged up millions of sinners in chains of wrath, it had not been such a demonstration of the wrath of God, and his hatred of sin, as the death and sufferings of his own Son. When we hear that God exposed his own Son to the utmost severity of wrath and vengeance, may we not justly cry out O the infinite evil of sin! O the

inflexible severity of divine justice! It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

4. The justice of God will be clearly manifested at the great day. God hath reared up many trophies already to the honour of his power and justice out of the ruins of his most insolent enemies: but then will be the most solemn triumph of divine justice. The apostle tells us, Acts 17:31 that 'he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.' On that awful day the justice and righteousness of God shall be clearly revealed, therefore it is called 'the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God,' Rom. 2:5. The equity of God's dealings and dispensations is not now so fully seen: but all will be open and manifest on that day. Then he will liberally reward the righteous, and severely punish the wicked.

5. God's justice will shine for ever in the torments of the damned in hell. The smoke of their furnace, their yellings and roarings, will proclaim through eternity the inexorable justice and severity of God. It is not enough for the satisfaction of his justice to deprive them of heaven and happiness; but he will inflict the most tormenting punishment upon sense and conscience in hell. For as both soul and body were guilty in this life, the one as the guide, the other as the instrument of sin, so it is but just and equal that they should both feel the penal effects of it hereafter. Sinners shall then be tormented in that wherein they most delighted: they shall then be invested with those objects which will cause the most dolorous perceptions in their sensitive faculties. The lake of fire and brimstone, the blackness of darkness, for ever, are words of a terrible signification. But no words can fully express the terrible ingredients of their misery. Their punishment will be in proportion to the glory of God's majesty that is provoked, and the extent of his power. And as the soul was the principal, and the body but an accessory in the works of sin; so its capacious faculties shall be far more tormented than the limited faculties of the outward senses. The fiery attributes of God shall be

transmitted through the glass of conscience, and centred upon damned spirits. The fire without will not be so tormenting as the fire within them. Then all the tormenting passions will be inflamed. What rancour, reluctance, and rage, will there be against the just power that sentenced them to hell! what impatience and indignation against themselves for their wilful and inexcusable sins, the just cause of it! how will they curse their creation, and wish their utter extinction as the final remedy of their misery! But all their ardent wishes will be in vain. For the guilt of sin will never be expiated, nor God so far reconciled as to annihilate them. As long as there is justice in heaven, or fire in hell, as long as God and eternity shall continue, they must suffer those torments which the strength and patience of an angel cannot bear one hour. The justice of God will blaze forth for ever in the agonies and torments of the damned.

It may not be improper here to take notice of, and answer some objections that are made against the divine justice.

Object. 1. If God be infinitely just and righteous, how stands it with his justice that insolent contemners of his majesty and laws should prosper in the world? This was observed by the saints long ago; see Psal. 73:5, 6, 7, 12; and has proved a stumbling-block to some of God's own children, and has seen apt to make them question his justice; see Job 21:7–14. Jer. 12:1, 2. But in answer, consider,

1. That the wicked may be sometimes instruments to do God's work. Though they do not design and intend his glory, yet they may be instrumental in promoting it. Thus Cyrus was instrumental for the building of God's temple at Jerusalem. Now there is some kind of justice in it that such persons should have a temporal reward. God is pleased to suffer those to prosper under whose wings his own people are sheltered. He will not be in any man's debt. Nebuchadnezzar did some service for God, and the Lord rewarded him for it by granting him an enlargement of greatness, Ezek. 29:18, 19, 20.

2. God doth not always let the wicked prosper in their sin. There are some whom he punisheth openly, that his justice may be observed by all. Hence the Psalmist saith, 'The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands,' Psal. 9:16. Sometimes their prosperity is but short lived, and they are suddenly cast down, as the Psalmist remarks, Psal. 73:18, 19, 20. His justice is Been striking men dead sometimes in the very act of sin; as in the case of Zimri and Cozbi, Pharaoh, Sennacherib, &c.

3. God suffers men to go on in sin and prosper, that he may render them the more inexcusable. This goodness and forbearance should lead them to repentance; and when it does not, it aggravates their sin, and makes them the more inexcusable, when he comes to reckon with them. Hence it is said of Jezebel, 'I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not,' Rev. 2:21. God spins out his mercies toward sinners; and if they do not repent and amend, his patience will be a witness against them, and his justice will be more cleared in their condemnation.

4. If God let the wicked prosper for a while, the vial of his wrath is all that while filling up, his sword is whetting and though he forbear them for a time, yet long-suffering is not forgiveness. The longer it be ere he give the blow, it will be the heavier when it comes. The last scene of justice is coming, when the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. There is a day of wrath approaching, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Then he will glorify his justice in taking vengeance on them for all their sins. God hath an eternity in which he will punish the wicked. Divine justice may be as a lion asleep for a time: but at last this lion will awake, and roar upon the sinner. Their long continued prosperity will heighten their eternal condemnation. There are many sinners in hell who lived in great pomp and prosperity in the world, and are now roaring under the terrible lashes of inexorable justice. Thus ye may see that the prosperity of the wicked is consistent enough with the justice of God.

Object. 2. God's own people oft-times suffer great afflictions in the world; they are persecuted and oppressed, and meet with a variety of troubles, Psal. 73:14. How stands this with the justice of God?

Ans. 1. The ways of God's judgments, though they are sometimes secret, yet they are never unjust. God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. There are culpable causes in them from which their afflictions spring. They have their spots and blemishes as well as others. Though they may be free from gross and atrocious crimes, yet they are guilty of much pride and passion, censoriousness, worldliness, &c. And the sins of God's people are more provoking in his sight than the sins of other men. And God will not suffer them to pass without correction, Amos 3:2. 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.' This justifies God in all the evils that befall them.

2. All the trials and sufferings of the godly are designed to refine and purify them, to promote their spiritual and eternal good, Heb. 12:10. Nothing proclaims God's faithfulness more than his taking such a course with them as may make them better. Hence says David, Psal. 119:75. 'I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.' Though they are sometimes pinched with wants, and meet with various outward troubles, yet even these are the accomplishments of a gracious promise, and are ordered for their good. It is to chastise them for their sin, and quicken them to repentance and mortification, to try and exercise their faith and patience, their sincerity and love to God, to wean their hearts from the world, and to promote their growth in grace.

3. It is no injustice in God to inflict a lesser punishment to prevent a greater. The best of God's children have that in them which is meritorious of hell; and doth God any wrong to them when he useth only the rod, when they deserved the scorpion? An earthly parent will not be reckoned cruel or unjust, if he only correct his children who deserved to be disinherited. When God corrects his children, he only puts wormwood into their cup, whereas he might fill it up with

fire and brimstone. Under the greatest pressure, they have just cause rather to admire his mercy, than to complain of his justice. So did the afflicted church, 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.'

Object. 3. If God be infinitely just, how could he transfer the punishment from the guilty? This is the objection of the Socinians against Christ's suffering for the sins of the elect. It is a violation of justice, say they, to transfer the punishment from one to another. How then could the righteous God punish his innocent Son for our sins?

I answer to this in general, That in some cases it is not unjust to punish the innocent for the guilty. For though an innocent person cannot suffer as innocent without injustice, yet he may voluntarily contract an obligation which will expose him to deserved sufferings. The innocent may suffer for the guilty, when he has power to dispose of his own life, and puts himself freely and voluntarily under an obligation to suffer, and is admitted to suffer by him who has power to punish, and when no detriment, but rather an advantage, accrues to the public thereby. In these circumstances, justice hath nothing to say against the punishing of an innocent person in the room of the guilty. Now, there is a concurrence of all these in the case in hand. For,

1. Christ had absolute power to dispose of himself. One reason why a man is not allowed to lay down his life for another is, because his life is not at his own disposal. But Christ was absolute lord of his own life, and had power to keep it or lay it down as he pleased. So he declares, John 10:18. 'No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.'

2. He freely consented to suffer for his people, and to undergo the punishment that they deserved. To compel an innocent person to suffer for the offences of another, may be an injury. But in this case

there was no constraint: for Christ most willingly offered himself: yea, he was not only willing, but most earnest and desirous to suffer and die in our room, Luke 12:50. 'I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?'

3. The Father admitted him as our Surety, and was well content that his sufferings should stand for ours, and that we thereupon should be absolved and discharged. It was the Father's will that Christ should undertake this work. Hence it is said, Psal. 40:8. 'I delight to do thy will, O my God.' And the Father loved Christ, because he so cheerfully consented to it, John 10:17. 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.'

4. There was no detriment to the public by Christ's death; but, on the contrary, many advantages redounded to it thereby. One reason why an innocent man cannot suffer for a malefactor is, because the community would lose a good man, and might suffer by the sparing of an ill member, and the innocent sufferer cannot have his life restored again being once lost. But in this case all things are quite otherwise: for Christ laid down his life, but so as to take it up again. He rose again on the third day, and death was swallowed up of victory. And those for whom he suffered were reclaimed, effectually changed, and made serviceable to God and man. So that here there was no injury done to any party by Christ's sufferings, though an innocent person. Not to them for whom he died; for they have inexpressible benefit thereby: he is made to them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Not to the person suffering: for he was perfectly willing, and suffered nothing without his own consent. Not to God: for he himself found out the ransom, and admitted Christ as our Surety. Not to any thing concerned in the government of God: for by the death of Christ all the ends of God's government were secured. His honour was hereby vindicated, the authority of his law preserved, and his subjects, by such an instance of severity on his own Son, were deterred from violating it. So that there is no injustice to any in God's punishing Christ in his people's stead.

Object. 4. How is it consistent with the justice of God to punish temporary sins with eternal torments in hell? Some think it hard, and scarcely consistent with infinite justice, to inflict eternal punishment for sins committed in a little time. But to clear the justice of God in this, consider,

1. That eternal punishment is agreeable to the sanction of the law. The wisdom of God required, that the penalty threatened upon the transgressor should be in its own nature so dreadful and terrible, that the fear of it might conquer and over-rule all the allurements and temptations to sin. If it had not been so, it would have reflected upon the wisdom of the Lawgiver, as if he had been defective, in not binding his subjects firmly enough to their duty, and the ends of government would not have been obtained. And therefore the first and second death was threatened to Adam in case of disobedience. And fear, as a watchful sentinel, was placed in his breast, that no guilty thought or irregular desire should enter in to break the tables of the law deposited there. So that eternal death is due to sinners by the sanction of the law.

2. The righteousness of God in punishing the wicked for ever in hell will appear, if ye consider that God by his infallible promise assures us, that all who sincerely serve and obey him shall be rewarded with everlasting happiness. They shall receive a blessedness most worthy of God to bestow, a blessedness that far surmounts our most comprehensive thoughts and imaginations. For eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for them that love him. Now, if everlasting felicity be despised and rejected, nothing remains but endless misery to be the sinner's portion. The consequence is infallible: For if sin, with an eternal hell in its retinue be chosen and embraced, it is most just and equal that the rational creature should inherit the fruit of its own choice. What can be more just and reasonable, than that those who are the slaves of the devil, and maintain his party here in the world, should have their recompense with him for ever hereafter? Nothing can be more just, than that

those who now say to the Almighty, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways, should receive that dreadful sentence at last, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.

3. The punishment of the damned must be eternal, because of the immense guilt and infinite evil of sin. It is owned by common reason, that there ought to be a proportion between the quality of the offence and the degree of the punishment. Justice takes the scales into its hand before it takes the sword. It is a rule in all sorts of judicature, that the degrees of an offence arise according to the degrees of dignity in the person offended. Now, the majesty of God is truly infinite, against whom sin is committed; and consequently the guilt of sin exceeds our boundless thoughts. One act of sin is rebellion against God, and includes in it the contempt of his majesty, the contradiction of his holiness, which is his peculiar glory, the denial of his omniscience and omnipresence, as if he were confined to the heavens, and busied in regulating the harmonious order of the stars, and did not observe what is done here below. And there is in it a defiance of his eternal power, and a provoking him to jealousy, as if we were stronger than he. O, what a dishonour is it to the God of glory, that proud dust should flee in his face, and controul his authority! What a horrid provocation is it to the Most High, that the reasonable creature, that is naturally and necessarily a subject, should despise the divine law and Lawgiver? From this it appears that sin is an infinite evil. There is in it a concurrence of impiety, ingratitude, perfidiousness, and whatever may enhance a crime to an excess of wickedness. Now, sin being an infinite evil, the punishment of it must also be infinite; and because a creature is not able to bear a punishment infinite in degree, by reason of its finite and limited nature, therefore it must be infinite in its duration. And for this cause the punishment of the damned shall never have an end. The almighty power of God will continue them in their being, but they will curse and blaspheme that support, which shall be given them only to perpetuate their torments; and ten thousand times wish that God would destroy them once for all, and that they might for ever shrink away into nothing. But that will never be granted to them. No; they

shall not have so much as the comfort of dying, nor shall they escape the vengeance of God by annihilation.

4. Their punishment must be eternal: for they will remain for ever unqualified for the least favour. The damned are not changed in hell, but continue their hatred and blasphemies against God. The seeds of this are in obstinate sinners here in the world, who are styled haters of God: but in the damned this hatred is direct and explicit; the fever is heightened into a phrenzy. The glorious and ever-blessed God is the object of their curses and eternal aversion. Our Lord tells us, that in hell there is weeping and gnashing of teeth,' i. e. extreme sorrow and extreme fury. Despair and rage are the proper passions of lost souls. For when the guilty sufferers are so weak, that they cannot by patience endure their torments, nor by strength resist the power that inflicts them, and withal are wicked and stubborn, they are enraged and irritated by their misery, and foam out blasphemies against the righteous Judge. We may apply to this purpose what is said of the worshippers of the beast, Rev. 16:10, 11. 'They gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.' The torment and blasphemies of these impenitent idolaters are a true representation of the state of the damned. Now, as they will always sin; so they must always suffer. On these accounts, then, it is agreeable to the wisdom and justice of God that their pains and torments be eternal.

But now it is time to shut up this point with a few inferences.

1. It is inconsistent with the nature of God to let sin go unpunished; or, vindictive justice is essential to God. To clear this, consider,

(1.) This is evident from the light of nature. For that God is just, is strongly and deeply stamped upon the minds of the children of men. Hence, when the barbarians saw the viper fasten upon Paul's hand, they cried out that vengeance pursued him as a murderer, Acts 28:4. The very instinct of nature told them, that there was a connection between guilt and punishment. To deny God to be just, is to offer

violence to the principles of nature, to put a lie upon those notions which are born with and impressed upon our reason. It is to condemn conscience as a cheat, and all the terrors thereof as a false alarm. In a word, it is to eradicate all religion, and to open a flood-gate to all wickedness and impiety.

(2.) This appears from scripture assertions and examples. [1.] Consider scripture examples and declarations, such as Rev. 16:5. 'Thou art righteous, O Lord, because thou hast judged, Rom. 2:5. —'The righteous judgment of God' 2 Thess. 1:6. 'It is a righteous thing with God to recompence with tribulation,' Heb. 2:2. 'Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward,' Heb. 12:29. 'Our God is a consuming fire,' Rom. 1:32. 'Knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death.' Compare Gen. 18:25. 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' [2.] Think upon scripture-examples, with respect to this matter. The angels, the flower and glory of the creation, the first-born of intelligent beings, when they revolted from their Maker, were doomed and cast into hell, where they lie reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the last day. Our first parents, and in them all their posterity, because of their apostasy, were sentenced to death and misery. The old world, except eight persons, were swept off the face of the earth, by a devouring deluge, on account of their impiety. Sodom and Gomorrah were by fire from heaven consumed to ashes, because of their vile uncleanness. The Egyptians sunk under multiplied plagues, because they hardened themselves against the Lord, and would not let Israel go. Yea, the Israelites themselves met with many severe judgments in the wilderness, in Canaan, and in Babylon, because they rebelled against the Lord their God. In a word, this people at last, for murdering the Messiah, and rejecting the gospel, were destroyed with a great destruction at the siege of Jerusalem, where eleven thousand perished by sword, famine, and pestilence, and very near a hundred thousand more were carried away captive.

(3.) This appears from the nature of God, which carries in it the utmost detestation of sin; and this necessarily produces punishment. 'Upon the wicked God will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest,' Psal. 11:6. Now the reason of all this holy severity is given in the very next verse, 'For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness.' His holy nature prompts him to love righteousness, and consequently to hate and punish all unrighteousness.

(4.) It is evident from the nature of sin. What is sin but the offering of the highest indignity to the infinite and Supreme Being, the Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor of mankind? It is an affronting of all his perfections, a reflection upon his wisdom, a contempt of his power, an insult to his holiness, a disparagement of his goodness, and an open defiance to his truth and faithfulness. If then sin be such an evil, an evil infinitely worse than we are capable to represent it, how can any imagine that God will forbear or neglect to punish such who obstinately live and die in the practice of it?

(5.) This will appear, if ye consider God as a Governor and Lawgiver. For his authority as such can never be preserved and maintained, if there be an universal impunity of criminal offences. Rebellion against Heaven would spread far and wide, devils and wicked men would grow absolutely unruly, the Divine Majesty and dominion would become contemptible, and his glorious sovereignty would be rendered vile and despicable, if bold offenders were not severely checked and punished for their enormities.

(6.) Consider, that if vindictive justice be not essential to God, it will be very hard, if not impossible, to give any tolerable account of the death and sufferings of Christ.

1. Is God infinitely just? Then there is a judgment to come. The justice of God requires that men should reap according to what they have sown; that it should be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. But it is not apparently so now in this present world. Here things are out of course; sin is rampant, and runs with a rapid

violence. Many times the most guilty sinners are not punished in the present life; they not only escape the justice of men, but are under no conspicuous marks of the justice of God. As sinners prosper and flourish, so saints are wronged and oppressed. They are often cast in a right cause, and can meet with no justice on the earth; yea, the best men are often in the worst condition, and merely upon account of their goodness. They are borne down and oppressed, because they do not make resistance; and are loaded with sufferings many times, because they bear them with patience. And the reason of these dispensations is, because now is the time of God's patience and of our trial. Therefore there must be a day wherein the justice of God shall be made manifest. Then he will set all things right. He will crown the righteous, and condemn the wicked. Then God shall have the glory of his justice, and his righteousness shall be openly vindicated. At the last day God's sword shall be drawn against offenders, and his justice shall be revealed before all the world. At that day all mouths shall be stopped, and God's justice shall be fully vindicated from all the cavils and clamours of unjust men.

2. This lets us see how unlike to God many men are. Some have no justice at all. Though their place and office oblige them to it, they neither fear God nor regard man. Many times they pervert justice, they decree unrighteous decrees, Isa. 10:1. Many are unjust in their dealings; they trick, cheat, and defraud their neighbours; sometimes in using false weights, the balances of deceit are in their hands, Hos. 12:7. Some hold the Bible in one hand, and false weights in the other; they cozen, defraud, and cheat, under a specious profession of religion. Some adulterate their commodities; their wine is mixed with water, Isa. 1:22. They mix bad grain with good, and yet sell it for pure grain. There are many ways by which men deceive and impose upon their neighbours. All which shew what a rare commodity justice is among them. But remember this is very unlike God. For he is the just and right one; he is righteous in all his ways. That man cannot possibly be godly who is not just. We are commanded to imitate him in all his imitable perfections. Though he doth not bid you be omnipotent, yet you ought to be just.

3. Is God infinitely just? Then we must not expostulate with or demand a reason of his actions. He hath not only authority on his side, but justice and equity. In all his dispensations towards men, however afflictive they be, he is just and righteous. He layeth judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, Isa. 28:17. It is below him to give an account to us of any of his proceedings. The plumb-line of our reason is too short to fathom the great depths of God's justice: for his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out, Rom. 11:33. We are to, adore his justice, where we cannot see the reason of it. God's justice hath often been wronged, but never did wrong to any. How unreasonable, then, is it for men to expostulate with and dispute against God?

4. Is God infinitely just? Then the salvation of sinners who have believed in Christ is most secure, and they need not doubt of pardon and acceptance. 'God is faithful and just to forgive them their sins,' 1 John 1:9. God hath promised it, and he will not break his word; yea, he stands bound in justice to do it; for Christ hath satisfied his justice for all your sins who are believers, so that it hath nothing to crave of you. It doth not stand with the justice of God to exact the same debt from you. Your Redeemer did not only satisfy justice, but also merited the exercise of it on your behalf. Hence it is that God is bound in justice to justify you upon your believing on Christ; for he is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, Rom. 3:26. So that the thoughts even of divine justice, which are terrible to others, may be comfortable to believers.

5. Is God infinitely just? Then the destruction of wicked and impenitent sinners is infallibly certain. For the just God will by no means acquit the guilty. His justice, which is essential to him, cannot but take vengeance on you.

6. Lastly, However severely the Lord deals with us, he neither doth nor can do us any wrong; and therefore we should lay our hand on our mouth, Lam. 3:39. 'Why doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?'

Sixthly, The goodness of God is the next communicable attribute that falls to be considered. The divine goodness is that essential property whereby he is altogether good in himself, and the author of all good to his creatures: Thou art good, and dost good, says the Psalmist, Ps. 119:68. There is a twofold goodness of God; his absolute and his relative goodness.

1. There is an absolute goodness of God. This is that whereby he is conceived to be good in himself, without any relation to his creatures. God is thus good because his nature is infinitely perfect.
2. There is his relative goodness, by which we are to understand his bounty and benignity. As all fulness dwells in him, so he hath a strong inclination to let it out to his people on all occasions. The whole earth is full of his goodness, Psal. 33:5.

The goodness of God is manifested,

1. In creation. There is no other perfection of the divine nature so eminently visible in the whole book of the creatures as this is. His goodness was the cause that he made any thing, and his wisdom was the cause that he made every thing in order and harmony. Here the goodness of God shines with a glorious lustre. All the varieties of the creatures which he hath made are so many beams and apparitions of his goodness. It was great goodness to communicate being to some things without himself, and to extract such a multitude of things from the depths of nothing, and to give life and breath to some of these creatures. Divine goodness formed their natures, beautified and adorned them with their several ornaments and perfections, whereby every thing was enabled to act for the good of the common world. Every creature hath a character of divine goodness upon it. The whole world is a map to represent, and a herald to proclaim, this amiable perfection of God. But the goodness of God is manifested especially in the creation of man. He raised him from the dust by his almighty power, and placed him in a more sublime condition, and endued him with choicer prerogatives, than the rest of the creatures.

What is man's soul and body but like a cabinet curiously carved, with a rich and precious gem inclosed in it! God hath made him an abridgment of the whole creation: the links of the two worlds, heaven and earth, are united in him. He communicates with the earth in the dust of his body, and he participates with the heavens in the crystal of his soul. He has the life of angels in his reason, and that of animals in his sense. Further, the divine goodness is manifested in making man after his image, in furnishing the world with so many creatures for his use, in giving him dominion over the works of his hands, and making him lord of this lower world.

2. In our redemption by Jesus Christ. O what astonishing goodness was it for the great and glorious God to give his only begotten Son to the death for such vile rebels and enemies as we all are by nature! The goodness of God, under the name of his love, is rendered as the only cause of our redemption by Christ, John 3:16. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.' This is an inexpressible so, a so that all the angels of heaven cannot analyse. None can conceive or understand the boundless extent and dimensions of it. God gave Christ for us to commend his love, and set it off with an admirable lustre. 'God commended his love towards us (saith the apostle), in that while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us.' O what an expensive goodness and love was this! Our redemption cost God more than what was laid out on the whole creation. 'The redemption of the soul is precious,' says the Psalmist. 'We are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.' Here God parted with his richest jewel, and with the eternal delight of his soul. This cost Christ dear. The Sun of righteousness behoved to be eclipsed, and must veil the beams of his divine glory. He made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was found in the likeness of sinful flesh. He did not appear in worldly pomp and magnificence, attended with a splendid retinue, and faring deliciously, but in a mean and low condition, without a settled dwelling-place, and was exposed to poverty and reproach. He was a man of sorrows, and

acquainted with grief. The last scene of his life was most painful. Upon the very apprehension of his last sufferings it is said, 'he began to be sorrowful,' as if he had been a stranger to grief till then. He endured with unparalleled patience all that wrath and misery that his people deserved to have suffered for ever in hell. O what a dreadful deluge of wrath and fiery indignation fell from heaven upon our ark, of which that of Noah was only but a type! He was bruised and ground to powder as it were in his agony in the garden. O how did his innocent soul boil under the fire of divine wrath! His blood brake through every pore of the vessel, by the extremity of that flame. God spared not his own Son, but dealt with him in extreme severity. He paid the utmost mite of satisfaction for his people's sins that justice could demand. O what admirable love and goodness is manifested here!

3. In his providential conduct and government. Here we must distinguish a twofold goodness of God, common and special.

(1.) There is God's common goodness, which is common to all the creatures. 'God is good to all,' says the Psalmist. All the creatures taste of his goodness. He preserves them in their beings, continues the species of all things, concurs with them in their distinct offices, and quickens the womb of nature. 'O Lord, thou preservest man and beast,' says David. He visits us every day and makes us feel the effects of his goodness, in 'giving us rain and fruitful seasons,' and filling our hearts with food and gladness. He waters the ground with his showers, and every day shines with new beams of his goodness.

(2.) There is a special goodness of God to his own people, whom he privileges with spiritual and saving blessings. His goodness to them is truly wonderful, in pardoning their iniquities, healing their spiritual diseases, sanctifying their natures, hearing and answering their prayers, bearing with their infirmities, accepting their imperfect services, supporting them under and delivering them from temptations, solving their doubts, directing and guiding them in their difficulties.

4. The goodness of God will be most signally manifested at the last day. It is laid up in heaven, Psal. 31:19. O who can tell how great goodness is laid up there? In heaven they shall have draughts of his goodness, even as much as they can hold. There God will be all in all to them, and communicate himself to them immediately, without the intervention of ordinances.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. God is a merciful God, and delights in mercy, 'His tender mercies are over all his works,' Psal. 145:9. There can be no case so bad as to be above or beyond the reach of mercy, to such as come to him in his own way, Isa. 55:7 seeing his goodness is infinite. The difference between the goodness and mercy of God is, that mercy respects only the miserable, but goodness extends to the happy also.

Object. But how is the severity of God against the wicked, and the godly too, consistent with that infinite goodness?

Ans. It is the property of goodness to hate and punish sin. Hence the Lord said to Moses, Exod. 33:19. 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.' Compare chap. 34:7. 'Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.' The afflictions of the godly are the effect of the divine goodness, and effect goodness in them. Hence says the apostle, Heb. 12:6. 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.' And says the psalmist, Psal. 119:71. 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.'

2. God can fully satisfy the desire of the soul, and in him it may rest with complacency and delight. He is all-sufficient in and to himself, and all his creatures. And this bountiful God should be the centre of our affections, desires, and joys. We should be restless and uneasy

till we find him, and earnestly long for the rich manifestations of his love and grace.

3. This doctrine of the divine goodness should strongly recommend to us those hard lessons prescribed by our Lord, and which he urges upon his followers from the consideration of his own goodness and beneficence, Mat. 5:44, 45. 'Love your enemies,' &c.

4. Abuse not the divine goodness. This is a great evil, and it is very frequent and common. It began in the first ages of the world, yea, it commenced a few minutes after the creation, and it continues to this very day. O abuse not the goodness of God, by forgetting his benefits, murmuring and repining at your lot and situation in the world, or by taking liberty to sin because of his goodness.

5. Seek not your happiness in created things and enjoyments, but in an ever-bountiful God, who is the spring and source of all goodness and mercy, and who can fully satisfy all the desires of an immortal soul.

Seventhly, The last communicable attribute of God to be taken notice of is his truth, which is that perfection of his nature whereby he is faithful, and free from all falsehood. Hence he is called 'the God that cannot lie,' Tit. 1:2. He is true in himself, Deut. 32:4. 'A God of truth, and without iniquity.' Now God is true,

1. In his works both of creation and providence; and that both in his common and more ordinary works of providence, in preserving and governing the creatures; and extraordinary ones, such as the glorious work of redemption, his great and miraculous operations, and the wonderful preservations of and deliverances granted to his church and people when exposed to the greatest dangers. God is true in all these; as Psal. 111:7, 8, 'The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.' Psal. 25:10. 'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth.' It is a part of the church's

song, Rev. 15:3. 'Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Rev. 16:7. 'Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.' All God's works are true and real things, not chimeras or appearances. He executes true judgments, grants true deliverances, works true miracles; his mercies are true mercies, and his comforts are true comforts. He does not deceive or delude his people with vain shews and appearances.

2. In his word. His word is most pure truth. 'Thy word is truth,' says our Saviour, John 17:17. And,

(1.) God is true in all the doctrines which he hath revealed. There is no flaw nor corruption in any of them. They are all the true form of sound words. And especially he is true in the doctrines of the gospel. Hence we read of the 'truth of the gospel,' Gal. 2:5; and the gospel is called 'the word of truth,' Eph. 1:13. Some of the doctrines revealed there are above the reach of human reason, as the doctrines of the glorious and adorable Trinity, the union of the two natures in the person of Christ, and the mystical union between him and believers. But though they cannot be comprehended by reason, they are not contrary to it.

(2.) In the historical narratives which he hath recorded in his word, as those of the creation, the fall of man, the drowning of the old world with the deluge, the incarnation of Christ, the many miracles which he wrought, his life and bloody death, &c. In these and other historical relations which we have in the word of God, there is no lie nor mistake at all. Hence Luke says, in his preface to his history, chap. 1:3, 4. 'It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightst know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.'

(3.) In his prophetic predictions. None of them fail or come short of their accomplishment, but are all fulfilled in their season. A man may

foretel such things as depend on natural causes, as rain and snow, heat and cold, the eclipses of the sun and moon, &c. But things are foretold in the scriptures which are merely contingent, depending upon the free grace of God, or the free will of man, as the rejecting of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles, &c. None of its predictions have fallen to the ground. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away. The Lord tells the prophet, 'The vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie,' Hab. 2:3. And after divers prophetic predictions, it is said, Rev. 22:6. 'These sayings are faithful and true.'

(4.) In his commands. All his commands are faithful, and his law is truth. All his precepts which he has given us are counterparts of his own heart, real copies of his approving will. The matter of them is exactly consonant to his holiness, and most acceptable and well-pleasing in his sight. God approves of all that he commands: so that his precepts are a true and perfect rule of holiness, without any flaw or defect.

(5.) In his threatenings. They are always accomplished in their season; not one of them shall fail. Says the Lord to the Jews, by the prophet, Zech. 1:6. 'Did not my word take hold of your fathers?' And the apostle Paul tells us, Rom. 2:2. 'We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.' It is true, indeed, some threatenings are conditional, and to be understood with the exception of repentance; so that unfeigned repentance and reformation prevent the execution of them; as is clear in the case of Nineveh, and from Jer. 18:7, 8. 'At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.' But divine threatenings will surely be executed upon impenitent and incorrigible sinners.

(6.) In his promises. All the promises are yea and amen, i. e. there shall be an infallible accomplishment of them. Therefore promised

blessings are called sure mercies, Is. 55:3. And the gospel, which is the compend of all the promises, is often called the word of truth. God's people have found the truth of the promises many times in their comfortable experience. Says Joshua to the Israelites, Joshua 23:14. 'Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.' Joshua was now about to die, and therefore could not be supposed to feign and dissemble; and he appeals to their own consciences, 'Ye know,' &c. And Solomon speaks to the same purpose, 1 Kings 8:56. 'Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant.' All the promises which he hath made to his people shall have their accomplishment in due time. Now, the truth of God is most frequently taken in this sense in scripture, and in this his faithfulness doth peculiarly consist. And,

[1.] This truth and faithfulness of God shines with peculiar lustre in accomplishing the many promises recorded in the holy scriptures; such as that made to Abraham concerning his seed, that, after their sojourning in a strange land four hundred and thirty years, they should come out again with great substance; which was punctually fulfilled, as Moses tells us, Exod. 12:41. 'And it came to pass, at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.' Such also was the accomplishment of the promise relating to the return of the Israelites from the Babylonish captivity after seventy years. No length of time nor distance of place can wear the remembrance of his promise from the divine mind. 'He remembered his holy promise,' says the Psalmist, 'and Abraham his servant,' Psal. 105:42.

[2.] In accomplishing the promises concerning the Messiah. So it is said, Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; grace in regard of our pardon, and truth in regard of the promise of God. This appears in

performing the promise of Christ's incarnation after so many revolutions of time, and many expectations of his coming, and many contrary appearances, and long stay of four thousand years after the first promise. After all this, God made good his word, by sending his Son into the world.—It appears in performing the promise of his death and sufferings. God passed his word to the church, that his Son should suffer death and the wrath of God for elect sinners. And having once passed his word for this, he would not spare him. Rather than God should break his word, his own dear Son must suffer a painful, shameful, and cursed death in his body, and the wrath of God in his innocent soul.—It appears in performing the promise of his resurrection from the dead. God had said, he would not leave his soul in hell. [the state of the dead], nor suffer his holy One to see corruption. This prophecy and promise was accordingly fulfilled: for he was raised from the dead in solemn triumph. Angels attended his resurrection, and the earth trembled and shook, as a sign of triumph and a token of victory; by which Christ intimated to the whole world, that he had overcome death in his own dominions, and lifted up his head as a glorious conqueror over all his enemies. It was promised that he should rise from the dead on the third day; and this was made good to a tittle.

(3.) In fulfilling his promises, when great difficulties and seeming improbabilities lay in the way of their accomplishment. Thus God promised to give Abraham a son, and he made it good, though Sarah was barren, and both Abraham and she were past age. Again, he brought back the captives from Babylon, though the thing seemed most improbable, and many great difficulties lay in the way. Difficulties are for men, not for God. 'Is any thing too hard for Jehovah?' Gen. 18:14. See Zech. 8:6. He is not tied to the road of human probabilities. He will turn nature upside-down, rather than not be as good as his word.

(4.) In fulfilling promises to his people, when their hopes and expectations have been given up. See instances, Ezek. 37:11. Isa. 49:14. There may be much unbelief in good men, their faith may be

sorely staggered. Yet God is faithful and true. Men may question his promise, but God cannot deny himself, 2 Tim. 2:13.

(5.) God's truth and faithfulness in keeping promise is confirmed by testimonies given to it by the saints in all ages. They have all set to their seal that God is true. They have all borne witness for God, and attested his unspotted faithfulness to the generations that were to come. See instances, Deut. 7:9. Josh. 23:14. 1 Kings 8:56. Psal. 146:6. All learned men are for experiments: now, the saints in all ages have made experiments upon God's word of promise, and have always found him to be true and faithful. 'The word of the Lord is tried,' says the Psalmist. None that relied on his promise were ever disappointed.

We may here also take a short view of the grounds of God's faithfulness. There are divers glorious attributes and perfections of the divine nature, upon which his truth and faithfulness in keeping promise is built, as so many strong and unshaken pillars. As,

1. His perfect knowledge of all things past. His knowledge is called 'a book of remembrance,' Mal. 3:16 to signify the continual presence of all things past before him. Men do often break their word, because they forget their promise; but forgetfulness cannot befall a God of infinite knowledge. He will ever be mindful of his covenant, and remember his holy covenant and promises, as the Psalmist speaks.

2. His immutability. Though men in making promises may have a real purpose to perform them, yet they may afterwards change their mind. But God is always firm to his purpose, and cannot change his mind, because of his unchangeable nature. Mal. 3:6. Jam. 1:17. Again men are often inconsiderate in making promises, and do often meet with what they did not foresee, but all events are eternally foreseen by God. So all his promises are made with infinite wisdom and judgment. To this purpose is that promise, Hos. 2:19. 'I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in

righteousness and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies.'

3. His power. Whatsoever he hath promised to his people, he is able to perform it. Sometimes men falsify their promise, and cannot make good their word through a defect of power. But God never out-promised himself. He can do whatsoever he pleased to do. It is said, Psal. 135:6. 'Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth,' &c. Yea, all things are possible with God. This was the foundation of Abraham's faith, which kept it from staggering at the thoughts of the improbabilities which lay in the way of the accomplishment of the promises, Rom. 4:21. In the case of civil debts, many a man cannot keep his promise, because others break to him. But though the whole creation should break, God is as able as ever. Hence the prophet says, Hab. 3:17, 18. '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 flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' Believers in Christ can never be undone, though the whole creation should disband and go into ruin.

4. His holiness. Some men are so wicked and malicious, that though they can yet they will not keep their word. But it is not so with God. He cannot be charged with any wickedness; for there is no unrighteousness in him, Psal. 92:15 by reason of the perfect holiness of his nature. It is impossible for him to lie. The deceitfulness and treachery that is to be found in men, flows from the corruption that is lodged in their hearts: but the divine nature is infinitely pure and holy. 'God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' Numb. 23:19.

5. His justice and righteousness. A man by virtue of a promise hath a right to the thing promised; so that it is his due; and justice requires to give every one his due. So God by his promise makes himself a

debtor, and his justice obliges him to pay. Hence it is said, 1 John 1:9. 'God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' He is faithful to pardon, as he hath promised it; and faithful in keeping promise, because he is just. Though it was his goodness and mercy to make the promise, yet his justice binds him to make it good. It is true, when God makes himself a debtor by his promise, it is indeed a debt of grace; yet it is a debt which it is just for God to pay. Therefore his word of promise is called 'the word of his righteousness,' Psal. 119:123.

6. The glory and honour of his name may give us full assurance of his faithfulness in making good his promises. He doth all things for his own glory; and therefore, wherever you find a promise, the honour of God is given as security for the performance of it. Hence his people plead this as a mighty argument to work for them. So Joshua, chap. 7:9. 'What wilt thou do unto thy great name?' q. d. 'O Lord, thy honour is a thousand times more valuable than our lives. It is of little importance what become of us. But, O! it is of infinite importance that the glory of thy name be secured, and thy faithfulness kept pure and unspotted in the world.' We find Moses pleading to the same purpose, Exod. 32:11, 12. 'Lord why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people;' q. d. 'It will be sad enough for the hands of the Egyptians to fall upon thy people; but infinitely worse for the tongues of the Egyptians to fall upon thy name.' In a word, the glory of all God's attributes is engaged for the performance of his promises, especially his faithfulness and power. Now, these are strong pillars upon which God's truth and faithfulness in keeping promise is built. He can as soon cease to be omniscient, unchangeable, omnipotent, infinitely just and holy, as he can cease to be true and faithful. He can as soon divest himself of his glory, and draw an eternal veil over all the

shining perfections and excellencies of his nature, as cease to be faithful and true.

But it is high time to finish this subject.

Inf. 1. Is God infinitely true? Then all hypocrisy and dissimulation, all falsehood and dishonesty, all lying, cheating, and double-dealing, is most hateful to God, is most opposite to his holy nature, and flows from the devil and our lusts, as father and mother to them, John 8:44.

2. This lets us see what a sure foundation we have for our faith in believing the truth of what is revealed in the holy scriptures; for they are the word of the God of truth, the word of God that cannot lie. The truth of God is an immoveable rock, upon which we may safely venture our salvation. The public faith of heaven is engaged for the happiness of believers; and can they ever have better security? The whole earth hangs upon the word of God's power; and shall not our faith hang upon the word of God's truth? There is nothing else we can rest upon, but the truth and faithfulness of God. We cannot trust in an arm of flesh, for this will fail us in the time of our need; nor can we trust in our own hearts, for the Spirit of God tells us that he that doth so is a fool. All other things are sandy foundations, which cannot abide the storm and trial: but the truth of God is an immoveable rock that cannot be shaken.

3. Hence we see that the reformed Protestant religion is the only true religion that is in the world, because it is built upon the infallible truth and veracity of God. We have reason to be thankful to God, that it is not built upon such sandy foundations as human unwritten traditions, or any human testimony whatsoever. It is built upon the God of truth, and not upon fallible men. We admit the testimony of the church as an help to our faith, but not as the ground and foundation of it. The precious truths which we believe, we receive them not upon the testimony of the churches, Popes, or councils, but upon the testimony of the God of truth that cannot lie. But the

Popish religion hath no sure foundation. The faith of Papists is built upon the testimony of men; so that their religion hath no more certainty in it, than these men have of infallibility.

4. Hence we may see matter of dreadful terror to all the wicked; for all the threatenings and curses of the law of a faithful God stand in full force against them, and will at last overwhelm them with rapid fury, if they do not fly to the mercy and grace of God, as manifested in Jesus Christ, who by his obedience unto death satisfied all the demands of law and justice, in the room of all who will take the benefit of his undertaking. Though in their atheistical unbelief they may bless themselves, saying, that they shall have peace, though they walk in the imagination of their hearts, to add drunkenness unto thirst; yet the Lord will not spare them, but the anger of the Lord and his jealousy will smoke against them, and all the curses that are written in his holy book shall light upon them; yea his wrathful vengeance, like an overflowing scourge, shall sweep them off the sinful stage of time into the depths of the devouring pit, where is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

5. Lastly, Imitate God in this his adorable perfection, by 'speaking the truth in love,' Eph. 4:15. Let the strictest rules of truth and sincerity be observed by you in all your dealings and intercourse with men. Lay aside all lying, falsehood, and dissimulation, all equivocations and secret reservations in your words and promises, and speak the truth every man with his neighbour.

Thus we have given you a short description of what God is. Imperfect it is, and imperfect it must be, seeing he is incomprehensible. Do ye study to believe what is taught you of God, and apply to him, through the Son of his love, for further discoveries of his glorious perfections and excellencies; and at length ye shall see him as he is, having a more enlarged and extensive knowledge of him, his nature and ways; though even then ye will not be able to comprehend him. For it was a wise and judicious answer of one that was asked, What God is? that if he knew that fully, he should be a God himself. And indeed that

being which we can comprehend, cannot be God, because he is infinite. O study God and ye will increase in the knowledge of him.

OF THE UNITY OF GOD

DEUT. 6:4.—Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD.

1 COR. 8:4.—We know that there is none other God but one.

COMPARE JER. 10:10.—But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God.

WE have, in several preceding discourses, been endeavouring a little to explain the description of God that is given in our shorter Catechism, agreeable to the holy scriptures; and although it has been very imperfect, seeing it is but little of God we can know here; yet I hope what has been said upon it will tend to your instruction, and establishment in the faith, I now proceed to the next question, relating to the unity of God; which we have very clearly and strongly confirmed by the three passages of scripture which I have read.

In the first of these texts there are two things which we are taught to believe concerning God. (1.) That he is JEHOVAH, a being infinitely and eternally perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient. (2.) That he is the one only God. Let us therefore have no other, nor desire to have any other. Some have thought that in this text there is a plain intimation of the Trinity of Persons in the unity of the Godhead; for here the name of God is thrice mentioned, and yet all declared to be but one. Happy they who have this one Lord for their God; for they have but one master to please, and but one benefactor to seek to.

In the second text the unity of God is also clearly asserted: There is none other God but one.

The third text presents us with a very amiable representation of God. (1.) As the true God. He is not a counterfeit and a mere pretender to divinity, as idols are; but he is really what he has revealed himself to be. He is one upon whom we may depend, and in whom and by whom we cannot be deceived. (2.) As the living God. He is life itself, has life in himself, and is the fountain of life to all the creatures. The gods of the heathen are dead things, worthless and useless; but ours is the living God and hath immortality.

From the three passages of scripture compared together, the following doctrine natively arises, viz.

DOCT. 'There is but one only, the living and true God.'

In discoursing this point, I shall shew,

I. Why God is called the living God.

II. Why he is called the true God.

III. That there is but one God.

IV. Deduce some inferences.

I. I am to shew why God is called the living God.

1. He is called the living God, in opposition to, and to distinguish him from dead idols, Psal. 115:4, 5, 6. 1 Thess. 1:9. These were but dead and lifeless things, stocks and stones, silver and gold, which the heathen nations did worship, neglecting the God that made the heavens and the earth. In this respect these idols were viler than the matter of which they were made, as the tree when in the ground had some life, but they had none.

2. Because God is the fountain of life, having all life in himself, John 5:26, and giving life to all things else. All life is in him and from him. (1.) Natural life, Acts 17:28. 'For in him we live.' 1 Tim. 6:13. 'Who

quickeneth all things.' (2.) Spiritual life, Eph. 2:1. 'You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.' (3.) Eternal life, Col. 3:4. 'Christ is our life.' His giving of these to the creatures proves that they are in him, though in a more eminent way; for nothing can give what it has not.

II. I proceed to shew why he is called the true God.

He is so called to distinguish him from all false or fictitious gods. Hence the apostle speaks of the Thessalonians having 'turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God,' 1 Thess. 1:9. And says the prophet, Jer. 10:11. 'The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.' The heathens, besides their worship of dead idols, worshipped also living creatures, Deut. 32:17. 'They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up.' They were only gods in their blinded opinion and foolish fancy, not in reality; no more than the picture of a man, mistaken for a man, is a true man.

There is a twofold truth. (1.) Of fidelity or faithfulness. Thus God is true, that is, faithful, as was before explained. But that is not the truth here meant. (2.) A truth of essence, whereby a thing really is, and does not exist in opinion only. Thus the greatest liar is a true man; that is, he is really a man. It is in this sense that truth is attributed to God here. And the meaning is, that there is a true God, and but one true God. That there is a true God, or that truly and really there is a God, may be clearly demonstrated against atheists, by the light of nature, seeing they refuse scripture-testimony.

1. The works of creation and providence declare that there is a God. The heavens, earth, sea, air, and all that in them is, evidently proclaim their Maker to be divine. Look to the heaven, and behold how it is adorned with sun, moon, and stars. How wisely are these heavenly bodies situated with respect to us! Were they nearer, they would scorch and burn up the earth; were they placed at a greater

distance, the earth would be bound with perpetual frost, and so be quite barren. How regularly do these heavenly bodies move, making night and day, summer and winter, in so orderly a manner, that these revolutions have never once ceased! If we consider the earth, we shall find it hang as a ball or globe in the air, yet its foundation immoveable, though hung upon nothing. How is it adorned with trees, flowers, corns, &c. and all things necessary for the use of man and beast! And what an instance of divine wisdom is it, that all things are not found in every place, that so commerce betwixt man and man may be advanced, and correspondence be established betwixt different and distant nations, in the reciprocal exchange of the commodities peculiar to each country! Are there not in these the brightest traces of order and symmetry, that point out a God as the former and preserver of them all? But let us look to man, that abridgement of the world, where the prints of a Divine Being appear in the brightest colours. The composition of his body, and the powers of his soul, may convince you of the existence of a Deity. For who but a God could unite such different substances, an immaterial spirit with an earthly body? who could distinguish so many parts, assign to them their situation, form, and temperature, with an absolute fitness for those uses to which they serve? Well may we say with the apostle, Acts 17:27, 28. 'He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being.' We may find him in the activity of our hands, in the beauty of our eyes, and in the vivacity of our senses. And to look inward, who hath endued the soul with such distinct and admirable faculties; the understanding, which exercises an empire over all things, compounds the most disagreeing, and divides the most intimate, by the lowest effects ascends to the highest cause; the will, which with such vigour pursues that which we esteem amiable and good, and recoils with aversion from that which we judge paining and evil; the memory, which preserves fresh and lively images of those things which are committed to its charge? Certainly then there is a God who made us.

As these things have a being, it leads us to the being of a God: for these things cannot be eternal; for then their being would be a

necessary being, and so not capable of alteration or destruction. If they had a beginning, they had it from another: then that must either have had it from itself, or another, and so on till we come to the first cause, which is God. For nothing can give itself a being, because so it should be and not be at one and the same time. And the order speaks out infinite wisdom that has so ruled and disposed all; or else it must be attributed to chance; which is far more absurd than to say that a most beautiful fabric was made by the fortuitous concourse of stones, timber, lime, &c. which is shocking to common sense.

2. Conscience tells men there is a God. It may be observed how it stirs up to duty, though the powers of the world would forbid it under the highest pains; it comforts a man after duty is performed, though he be persecuted for it. It condemns and stings a man for sin, even for secret sins unknown to any in the world, and that even where there is no hazard at all from that quarter. These are terrors that no art can pluck up, nor any force quell; and when men are going out of the world, are most lively and pungent, even when their judgment is most clear, and free from the clouds and the prejudices of passions. How could these things be, if there were not a God, who by an omnipotent hand has planted conscience in their bosoms, as his own vicegerent, that stings them when none sees them? Athiests may, with as much hope of success, attempt to pull the sun, moon, and stars out of heaven, as to eradicate these innate impressions of a Supreme Divine Being.

3. The universal and perpetual consent of all nations in this matter, evinces that there is a God. That must needs be a natural truth, that in all ages, all nations, however different in all other things, have yet held that there is a God, so that they would rather worship any thing than not have some God. Go back to ancient times; ask your fathers and they will tell you, your forefathers and your most ancient ancestors, and they will declare unto you, both that there is a God, and what he did in their days, and in the old times before them. Nay, inquire of the nations round about you, Spain and Turkey, the barbarous Tartars, the wild Africans, and the ignorant Americans,

and they will all with one mouth confess this undeniable truth, That there is a God. This is an universal dictate of nature, spread as far and wide as reason and mankind are on the face of the earth. Some were called atheists among the heathens, not because they owned no God, but because they disowned their false gods. And if their have been any speculative atheists, that is, such who have been at all times thoroughly persuaded that that there is no Supreme Divine Being, they have been still looked on as monsters of men, and prodigies in nature, which have been universally abhorred as pests of society, and enemies to mankind. But the truth is, whatever advances men may make towards atheism in their depraved judgments, yet it is absolutely impossible to get the notion of a Deity rooted quite out of the soul.

Let not the athiest (if such a creature can possibly exist in a human form) pretend, that this universal belief of a divine existence which has obtained in the world, is the product of a successful political device, contrived by its crafty governors to keep it in awe and subjection to themselves. For as this is nothing but a cunning insinuation to support the worst of causes, so it is absolutely unaccountable how this device should be so prevalent as to gain ground in the consciences of men, and exercise such an uncontrollable empire over them. Is it possible that a few crafty men should so impose upon all the world, and they should never be, and, for any thing can be seen, shall never be able to free themselves from the fraud?

4. Lastly, Will ye consider the multitude of miracles which have occurred in the world. If these wonders of nature which we call miracles be nothing else but a mere lie and forgery, how comes the world to be so generally imposed on? How comes not only the Jewish but the Christian religion to be confirmed and ratified in such a firm manner as they have been amongst men? But if it be true that nature's bonds are sometimes broken, that the ordinary methods of things and actions are crossed, and turned quite another way; if ever the sun stood still, or the angels were seen on an embassy from

heaven; if ever God appeared in a flaming bush, and talked with man from the clouds; if ever sin was punished with a shower of fire and brimstone from heaven; in a word, if ever diseases were cured by a touch, and the dead raised to life by prayer: I say, if all these things be true, then answer me, Who is so able and so bold thus to transgress all the laws and bands of nature? Certainly it can be no other than God.

III. I come now to shew that there is but one God. There are gods many, and lords many, in title and the opinion of men; but there is only one true God, having no fellow or competitor. This great and important truth I shall endeavour to confirm, both from scripture and reason.

1. The scripture is very express and pointed on this head: Deut. 6:4. 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.' 'Isa. 44:6. 'I am the first, and the last, and besides me there is no God.' Mark 12:32. 'There is one God, and there is none other but he.' Consult also the following passages, which clearly establish this article, viz. 1 Sam. 2:2. Psal. 18:31. Isa. 46:9. 1 Cor. 8:4, 6.

2. This truth is clear from reason.

(1.) There can be but one First Cause, which hath its being of itself, and gave being to all other things, and on which all other beings depend, and that is God: for one such is sufficient for the production, preservation, and government of all things: and therefore more are superfluous, for there is no need of them at all. Certainly he that made the world can preserve, govern, and guide it, without the assistance of any other God; for if he needed any assistance, he were not God himself, an infinitely perfect and all-sufficient being. And whatever power, wisdom, or other requisite perfections can be imagined to be in many gods, for making, preserving, and governing the world, all these are in one infinitely-perfect being. Therefore it is useless to feign many, seeing one is sufficient.

(2.) There can be but one infinite being, and therefore there is but one God. Two infinities imply a contradiction. Seeing God fills heaven and earth with his presence, and is infinite in all the perfections and excellencies of his nature, there can be no place for another infinite to subsist.

(3.) There can be but one Independent Being, and therefore but one God. [1.] There can be but one independent in being: for if there were more gods, either one of them would be the cause and author of being to the rest, and then that one would be the only God: or none of them would be the cause and author of being to the rest, and so none of them would be God; because none of them would be independent, or the fountain of being to all. [2.] There can be but one independent in working. For if there were more independent beings, then in those things wherein they will and act freely, they might will and act contrary things, and so oppose and hinder one another: so that being equal in power, nothing would be done by either of them. Yea, though we should suppose a plurality of gods agreeing in all things, yet seeing their mutual consent and agreement would be necessary to every action, it plainly appears, that each of them would necessarily depend on the rest in his operations; and so none of them would be God, because not absolutely independent.

(4.) There can be but one Omnipotent. For if there were two omnipotent beings, then the one is able to do whatsoever he will, and yet the other is able to resist and hinder him. And if the one cannot hinder the other, then that other is not omnipotent. Again, we must conceive two such beings, either as agreeing, and so the one would be superfluous; or as disagreeing, and so all would be brought to confusion, or nothing would be done at all; for that which the one would do, the other would oppose and hinder; just like a ship with two pilots of equal power, where the one would be ever cross to the other; when the one would sail, the other would cast anchor. Here would be a continual confusion, and the ship must needs perish. The order and harmony of the world, the constant and uniform

government of all things, is a plain argument, that there is but one only Omnipotent being that rules all.

(5.) The supposition of a plurality of gods is destructive to all true religion. For if there were more than one God, we would be obliged to worship and serve more than one. But this it is impossible for us to do; as will plainly appear, if ye consider what divine worship and service is. Religious worship and adoration must be performed with the whole man. This is what the divine eminence and excellency requires, that we love him with all our heart, soul and strength, and serve him with all the powers and faculties of our souls, and members of our bodies; and that our whole man, time, strength, and all we have, be entirely devoted to him alone. But this cannot be done to a plurality of gods. For in serving and worshipping a plurality, our hearts and strength, our time and talents, would be divided among them. To this purpose our Lord argues, Matth. 6:24. 'No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' Mammon is thought to be an idol, which the heathens reckoned to be the god of money and riches. Now, says Christ, you cannot serve them both; if you would have the Lord for your God, and serve him, you must renounce mammon. We cannot serve two gods or masters: if but one require our whole time and strength, we cannot serve the other.

6. If there might be more gods than one, nothing would hinder why there might not be one, or two, or three millions of them. No argument can be brought for a plurality of gods, suppose two or three, but what a man might, by purity of reason, make use of for ever so many. Hence it is, that when men have once begun to fancy a plurality of gods, they have been endless in such fancies and imaginations. To this purpose is that charge against the Jews, who in this conformed themselves very much to the nations round about them, 'According to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah,' Jer. 2:28. Varro reckons up three hundred gods whom the heathens worshipped, and Hesiod reckons about three thousand of them.

Indeed, if we once begin to fancy more gods than one, where shall we make an end? So that the opinion or conception of a plurality of gods is most ridiculous and irrational.

And this should be observed against those who pretend, that the Father is the most high God, and that there is no most high God but one, yet that there is another true God, viz. Christ, who in very deed, as to them, is but a mere man; yet they pretend he is the true God. Christ is God, and the true and most high God. But, in opposition to them, consider that to be a man and to be a God are opposite, and cannot be said of one in respect of one nature, Jer. 31:3. Acts 14:15. Jer. 10:11.

I shall now shut up this subject with a few inferences.

1. Wo to atheists, then, whether they be such in heart or life; for their case is dreadful and desperate: and they shall sooner or later feel the heaviest strokes of the vengeance of that God whom they impiously deny, whether in opinion or by works. To dissuade from this fearful wickedness, consider,

(1.) That atheism is most irrational. It is great folly; and therefore the Psalmist saith, Psal. 14:1. 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.' It is contrary to the stream of universal reason; contrary to the natural dictates of the atheist's own soul; and contrary to the testimony of every creature. The atheist hath as many arguments against him as there are creatures in heaven and earth. Besides, it is most unreasonable for any man to hazard himself on this bottom in the denial of a God. May he not reason thus with himself, what if there be a God, for any thing that I know? then what a dreadful case will I be in when I find it so? If there be a God, and I fear and serve him, I gain a blessed and glorious eternity; but if there be no God, I lose nothing but my sordid lusts, by believing that there is one. Now, ought not reasonable creatures to argue thus with themselves? What a doleful meeting will there be between the God who is denied, and the atheist that denies him! He will meet with fearful reproaches on

God's part, and with dreadful terrors on his own: all that he gains is but a liberty to sin here, and a certainty to suffer for it hereafter, if he be in an error, as undoubtedly he is.

(2.) Atheism is most impious. What horrid impiety is it for men to deny their Creator a being, without whose goodness they could have had none themselves? Nay, every atheist is a Deicide, a killer of God as much as in him lies. He aims at the destruction of his very being. The atheist says upon the matter, that God is unworthy of a being, and that it were well if the world were rid of him.

(3.) Atheism is of pernicious consequence both to others and to the atheist himself. To others: for (1.) It would root out the foundation of government, and demolish all order among men. The being of God is the great guard of the world: for it is the sense of a Deity, upon which all civil order in cities and kingdoms is founded. Without this, there is no tie upon the consciences of men to restrain them from the most atrocious impieties and villanies. A city of atheists would be a heap of confusion. There could be no traffic nor commerce, if all the sacred bonds of it in the consciences of men were thus snapt asunder by denying the existence of God. (2.) It is introductive of all evil into the world. If you take away God, you take away conscience, and thereby all rules of good and evil. And how could any laws be made, when the measure and standard of them is removed? for all good laws are founded upon the dictates of conscience and reason, and upon common sentiments in human nature, which spring from a sense of God. So that if the foundation be destroyed, the whole superstructure must needs tumble down. A man might be a thief, a murderer, and an adulterer, and yet in a strict sense not be an offender. The worst of actions could not be evil, if a man were a god to himself. Where there is no sense of God, the bars are removed, and the flood gates of all impiety rush in upon mankind. The whole earth would be filled with violence, and all flesh would corrupt their way.

Again, atheism is pernicious to the atheist himself, who denies the being of God, or endeavours to erase all notions of the Deity out of his mind. What can he gain by this but a sordid pleasure, unworthy of a reasonable nature? And suppose there were no God, what can he lose but his fleshly lusts, by believing there is one? By believing and confessing a God, a man ventures no loss; but by denying him, he runs the most desperate hazard if there be one. For this exposes him to the most dreadful wrath and vengeance of God. If there be a hotter receptacle in hell than another, it will be reserved for the atheist, who strikes and fights against God's very being.

(4.) Atheists are worse than heathens: for they worshipped many gods, but these worship none at all. They preserved some notion of God in the world, but these would banish him from both heaven and earth. They degraded him, but these would destroy him. Yea, they are worse than the very devils: for the devils are under the dread of this truth, That God is. It is said they 'believe and tremble,' Jam. 2:19. It is impossible for them to be atheists in opinion; for they feel there is a God by that sense of his wrath that torments them. There may be atheists in the church, but there are none in hell. Thus atheism is a most dreadful evil, most carefully to be guarded against.

Inf. 2. Seeing there is one only the living and true God, we owe the most perfect and unlimited obedience to his will. We are to obey the will of his command with readiness and alacrity; and submit to the will of his providence with the utmost cheerfulness, without fretting or murmuring.

Inf. 3. Is God one? then his children should live in unity, that they may be one as he is one. They should study to be one in judgment and opinion, one in affection, and one in practice. We should all live as the family of one God, carefully avoiding divisions, and whatever may tend to interrupt the communion of saints.

Inf. 4. Seeing God is one, he should be the centre of our affections, love, fear, delight, joy, &c. Deut. 6:4, 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.'

I shall conclude all with a few directions.

1. Beware of such opinions as tend to atheism, and aim at the undermining of this supreme truth, that God is. There are many opinions which have a woful tendency this way. Such is that of denying the immortality of the soul. This is a stroke at a distance at the very being of God, who is the Supreme Spirit. There is an order among spirits; first, the souls of men, then angels, and then God. Now, these degrees of spirits are, as it were, a rail and fence about the sense we have of the being and majesty of God. And such as deny the immortality of the soul, strike at a distance at the eternity and existence of the Deity.

Another opinion is, that men of all religions shall be saved; so that it is no matter what religion a man be of, if he walk according to the principles of it, and be of a sober moral life. In these latter times some are grown weary of the Christian religion, and by an excess of charity betray their faith, and plead for the salvation of heathens, Turks, and infidels. But ye should remember, that, as there is but one God, and one heavenly Jerusalem, so there is but one faith, and one way by which men can come to the enjoyment of God there. Such libertine principles have a manifest tendency to shake people loose of all religion. To make many doors to heaven, as one says, is to widen the gates of hell.

Another opinion tending to atheism is, the denying of God's providence in the government of the world. Some make him an idle spectator of what is done here below, asserting that he is contented with his own blessedness and glory, and that whatever is without him is neither in his thoughts nor care. Many think that this world is but as a great clock or machine, which was set a-going at first by God, and afterwards left to its own motion. But if ye exempt any thing from the dominion of providence, then you will soon run into all

manner of libertinism. If Satan and wicked men may do what they will, and God be only a looker-on, and not concerned with human affairs, then ye may worship the devil, lest he hurt you, and fear men though God be propitious to you.

2. Beware of indulging sin. When ye take a liberty to sin, and gratify your vile and sordid lusts, you will hate the law that forbids it; and this will lead you to a hatred of the Lawgiver; and hatred of God strikes against his very being. When once you allow yourselves an indulgence to sin, you will be apt to think, O that there were no God to punish me for my crimes! and would gladly persuade yourselves that there is none; and will think it your only game to do what ye can to root out the notions of God in your own minds, for your own quiet, that so ye may wallow in sin without remorse.

3. Prize and study the holy scriptures, for they shew clearly that there is a God. There are more clear marks and characters of a Deity stamped upon the holy scriptures than upon all the works of nature. Therefore converse much with them. By this means was Junius converted from atheism. His father perceiving him to be so atheistical, caused lay a Bible in every room, so that in whatsoever room he entered, a Bible haunted him; and he fancied it upbraided him thus: 'Wilt thou not read me, atheist? wilt thou not read me?' Whereupon he read it, and was thereby converted. I say then, study the holy scriptures, and in doing so, learn to submit your reason to divine revelation. For some men, neglecting the scriptures, and going forth in the pride of their own understandings, have at last disputed themselves into flat atheism.

4. Study God in the creatures as well as in the scriptures. The creatures were all made to be heralds of the divine glory, and his glorious being and perfections appear evidently in them. Hence saith the Psalmist, Psal. 19:1–4. 'The heavens declare the glory of God? and the firmament sheweth his handy-work, day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech, nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out

through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world: in them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun.' The world is sometimes compared to a book, and sometimes to a preacher. The universe is like a great printed book, wherein God sets forth himself to our view; and the great diversity of creatures which are in it, are so many letters, out of which we may spell his name. And they all preach loudly unto us the glorious being and excellencies of God. And therefore the apostle tells us, Rom. 1:20, 'The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.' In the book of the creatures God hath written a part of the excellency of his name; and you should learn to read God wherever he hath made himself legible to you.

5. Lastly, Ye who are yet sinners, lying in your natural state of sin and misery, come unto God in Christ, and receive him as your God by faith, and so ye will be preserved from atheism. And ye who are believers in Christ, be often viewing God in your own experiences of him. Have you not often found God in the strengthening, reviving, and refreshing influences of his grace upon your souls? Have ye not had sweet manifestations of his love? Have you not had frequent refreshing tastes of his goodness, in pardoning your iniquities, hearing and answering your prayers, supplying your wants, and feasting your souls? The reviewing of such experiences will be a mighty preservative against atheism. Can you doubt of his being, when you have been so often revived, refreshed, and supported by him? The secret touches of God upon your hearts, and your inward converses with him, are to you a clearer evidence of the being of God, than all the works of nature.

OF THE HOLY TRINITY

¹ JOHN 5:7.—For there are three that bear record in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.

IN the 5th verse of this chapter, John lays down a fundamental article of the Christian faith, That Jesus is the Son of God; and brings in the witnesses of this truth, ver. 7 and 8. The text condescends on the divine heavenly witnesses. Where, consider,

1. Their number, three, viz. three persons.
2. Their names, the Father, the Word, that is, the Son, so called, because he reveals the Father's mind, and the Holy Ghost. And here is noted the order of their subsisting also.
3. The majesty and glory of these witnesses; they are in heaven, manifesting their glory there, and from it have borne record; which should make the inhabitants of the world to believe their testimony.
4. Their act: They bear record to this truth.
5. Their unity: They are one, one God; not only one in consent and agreement, but one thing, one substance, one essence.

The doctrine evidently arising from the words is,

DOCT. 'There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

- I. Explain the terms mentioned in the doctrine, the Godhead, and a person.
- II. Shew that there are three persons in the Godhead.
- III. Prove that these three are distinct persons.

IV. Demonstrate that these three persons are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

V. Evince the weight and importance of this article of the Christian faith.

VI. Lastly, Deduce a few inferences.

I. I am to explain the terms mentioned in the doctrine, the Godhead, and a person.

1. By the Godhead is meant the nature or essence of God, Acts 17:29, even as by manhood is understood the nature of man. Now the Godhead is but one, there being but one God.

2. A divine person, or a person in the Godhead, is the Godhead distinguished by personal properties, Heb. 1:3, where Christ the Son of God is called 'the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.' For consider the Godhead as the fountain or principle of the Deity, so it is the first person; consider it as begotten of the Father, it is the second; and as proceeding from the Father and the Son, it is the third person.

II. Our next business is to shew that there are three persons in the Godhead. This is confirmed by the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament.

1. The Old Testament plainly holds forth a plurality of persons in the Godhead, Gen. 1:26. 'God said, let us make man in our own image, after our likeness.' Chap. 3:22. 'And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.' This cannot be understood of angels: for man is said to be created after the image of God, but never after the image of angels; and the temptation was, 'Ye shall be as gods,' not as angels. Nor must it be conceived, that God speaks so after the manner of kings; for that way of speaking is used rather to note modesty than royalty. But when God speaks so as to discover most of his royalty, he speaks in the singular number, as in

the giving of the law, 'I am the Lord thy God.' This trinity of persons is also not obscurely mentioned in Psal. 33:6. 'By the Word of the Lord, or JEHOVAH, were the heavens made; and all the host of them, by the breath, or Spirit, of his mouth.' Here is mention made of Jehovah the Word and the Spirit, as jointly acting in the work of creation. Accordingly we find, that 'all things were made by the Word,' John 1:3 and that 'the Spirit garnished the heavens,' Job 26:13. Nay, a Trinity of persons is mentioned, Isa. 63 where, besides that the Lord, or Jehovah, is three times spoken of, ver. 7 we read, of 'the angel of his presence,' which denotes two persons, and 'his Spirit,' ver. 9, 10. So that it evidently appears, that the doctrine of the Trinity was revealed under the Old Testament.

2. The New Testament most plainly teaches this doctrine.

(1.) I begin with the text, where it is expressly asserted, There are three that bear record, &c. Here are three witnesses, and therefore three persons. Not three names of one person: for if a person have ever so many names, he is still but one witness. Not three Gods, but one.

(2.) In the baptism of Christ, Matth. 3:16, 17 mention is made of the Father speaking in an audible voice, the Son in the human nature baptized by John, and the Holy Ghost appearing in the shape of a dove; plainly importing three divine persons.

(3.) This appears from our baptism, Matth. 28:8, 19. 'Go ye and teach all nations baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.' Observe the words, in the name, not names; which denotes, that these three are one God: and yet they are distinctly reckoned three in number, and so are three distinct persons.

(4.) It appears from the apostolical benediction, where all blessings are sought from the three persons distinctly mentioned, 2 Cor. 13:14. 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.'

III. That these three are distinct persons, (for though they cannot be divided, yet they are distinguished), is evident. For the Son is distinct from the Father 'being the express image of his person,' Heb. 1:2.; and in John 8:17, 18 he reckons his Father one witness and himself another. And that the Holy Ghost is distinct from both, appears from John 14:16, 17. 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of truth.' And the text is plain for the distinction of all the three. Now, they are distinguished by their order of subsisting, and their incommunicable personal properties. In respect of the order of subsistence, the Father is the first person, as the fountain of the Deity, having the foundation of personal subsistence in himself; the Son is the second person, and hath the foundation of personal subsistence from the Father; and the Holy Ghost is the third person, as having the foundation of personal subsistence from the Father and the Son. And so for their personal properties,

1. It is the personal property of the Father to beget the Son, Heb. 1:5, 6, 8. 'Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son. And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.—But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.' This cannot be ascribed either to the Son or Holy Ghost.

2. It is the property of the Son to be begotten of the Father, John 1:14, 18. 'We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.'

3. The property of the Holy Ghost is to proceed from the Father and the Son, John 15:26. 'When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.' In Gal. 4:6 he is called 'the Spirit of the Son;' and in Rom. 8:9. 'the Spirit of Christ.' He is said to

'receive all things from Christ,' John 16:14, 15.; to be 'sent by him,' John 15:26.: and to be 'sent by the Father in Christ's name,' John 14:26. All this plainly implies, that the Holy Spirit proceedeth both from the Father and the Son. This generation of the Son and Holy Ghost was from all eternity. For as God is from everlasting to everlasting, so must this generation and procession be: and to deny it, would be to deny the supreme and eternal Godhead of all the three glorious persons.

IV. I proceed to shew, that these three persons are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. To this end consider,

1. How express the text is, These three are one. When the apostle speaks of the unity of the earthly witnesses, ver. 8 he says, they 'agree in one,' acting in unity of consent or agreement only. But the heavenly witnesses are one, viz. in nature or essence. They are not only of a like nature or substance, but one and the same substance; and if so, they are and must be equal in all essential perfections, as power and glory.

2. There is but one true God, as was before proved, and there can be but one true God. Now, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are each of them the true God; and therefore they are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. And this I shall prove by scripture testimony.

First, That the Father is true God, none that acknowledge a God do deny. Divine worship and attributes are ascribed to him. But,

Secondly, That the Son is true God, appears if ye consider,

1. The scriptures expressly calls him God, Rom. 9:5. John 1:1. Acts 20:28.; 'the true God' 1 John 5:20.; 'the great God,' Tit. 2:13.; the 'mighty God, Isa. 9:6. 'Jehovah or Lord,' Mal. 3:1. which is a name proper to the true God only, Psal. 83 ult.

2. The attributes of God, which are one and the same with God himself, are ascribed to him; as eternity, Micah 5:2. 'Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting; independence and omnipotence, Rev. 1:8.—'The Almighty;' omnipresence, John 3:13 where he is said to be 'in heaven,' when bodily on earth; and Matth. 28:20. 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world:' omniscience, John 21:17. 'Lord thou knowest all things,' says Peter to him; and unchangeableness, Heb. 1:11, 12. 'They shall perish, but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.'

3. The works proper and peculiar to God are ascribed to him; as creation, John 1:3. 'All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.' Conservation of all things, Heb. 1:3.—'upholding all things by the word of his power,' Raising the dead by his own power, and at his own pleasure, John 5:21, 26. 'The Son quickeneth whom he will.' The Father 'hath given to the Son to have life in himself.' The saving of sinners, Hos. 1:7.—'I will save them by the Lord their God.' Compare chap. 13:4. 'in me is thine help.' Yea, whatsoever the Father doth, the Son doth likewise.

4. Divine worship is due to him, and therefore he is true God, Matth. 4:10. The angels are commanded to 'worship him,' Heb. 1:8. All must give the same honour to him as to the Father, John 5:23. We must have faith in him, and they are blessed that believe in him, Psal. 2:12 compare Jer. 17:5. We are to pray to him, Acts 7:58.; and we are baptised in his name, Matth. 28:19. Nay, he is expressly said to be 'equal with the Father,' Phil. 2:6 and 'one with him.' John 10:30. Now, seeing God will 'not give his glory to another,' Isa. 48:11 because he is true and cannot lie, and he is just, it follows, that though Christ be a distinct person, yet he is not a distinct God from his Father, but one God with him, the same in substance equal in power and glory. And it is no contradiction to this doctrine when Christ says, 'My Father is greater than I,' John 14:28.; for he is not

speaking there of his nature as God, but of his mediatory office; and hence he is called the Father's 'servant,' Is. 42:1.

Thirdly, That the Holy Ghost is true God, or a divine person, appears, if ye consider,

1. The scripture expressly calls him God, Acts 5:3, 4. 1 Cor. 3:16. Isa. 6:9 compared with Acts 28:25, 26. 2 Sam. 23:2, 3. He is called 'Jehovah, or the Lord,' Num. 12:6 compare 2 Pet. 1:21.

2. Divine attributes are ascribed to him; as omnipotence, he 'worketh all in all,' 1 Cor. 12:6, 9, 10, 11.; omnipresence, Psal. 139:7.; and omniscience, 1 Cor. 2:10.

3. Works peculiar to God are ascribed to him; as creation, Psal. 33:6; conservation, Psal. 104:30.; working miracles, Matt. 12:28.; raising the dead, Rom. 8:11.; inspiring the prophets, 2 Tim. 3:16 compare 2 Pet. 1:21.

4. Divine worship is due to him. We are baptised in his name, Matth. 28:19.; we are to pray to him, 2 Cor. 13:14. Acts 4:23, 25 compare 2 Sam. 23:2, 3.

Hence it appears,

1. That the Godhead is not divided, but that each of the three persons hath the one whole Godhead, or divine nature.

2. That it is sinful to imagine any inequality amongst the three divine persons, or to think one of them more honourable than another, seeing they are all one God.

V. I proceed to consider the weight and importance of this article. It is a fundamental article, the belief whereof is necessary to salvation. For those that are 'without God,' Eph. 2:12 and 'have not the Father,' cannot be saved; but 'whoso denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father,' 1 John 2:23. Those that are none of Christ's cannot be saved;

but 'he that hath not the Spirit, is none of his,' Rom. 8:9. None receive the Spirit but those that know him. John 14:17. This mystery of the Trinity is so interwoven with the whole of religion, that their can neither be any true faith, right worship, or obedience without it. For take away this doctrine, and the object of faith, worship, and obedience is changed; seeing the object of these declared in the scripture, is the three persons in the Godhead; and the scriptures know no other God. Where is faith, if this be taken away? John 17:3. 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' Here it is to be observed, that our Lord does not call the Father only the true God, exclusive of the other persons of the Trinity; but that he (including the other persons who all subsist in the same one undivided essence) is the only true God, in opposition to idols, falsely called gods. 1 John 2:23. 'Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.' There is no more true worship or fellowship with God in it: 'For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father,' Eph. 2:18. And there is no more obedience without it, John 15:23. 'He that hateth me,' says Christ, 'hateth my Father also.' John 5:23, 'He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.' We are debtors to the Spirit, to live after the Spirit, and are bound by baptism to the obedience of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. How much ought we to prize divine revelation, wherein we have a discovery of this incomprehensible mystery! This is a truth which nature's light could never have found out. It is above reason, though not contrary to it; for reason, though it could never have brought it to light, yet when it is discovered, it must needs yield to it; for as the judgment of sense must be corrected by reason, so the judgment of reason by faith.
2. See here that God whom you are to take for your God, to love, trust in, worship and obey, even the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This is that God who offers himself to you in the gospel, and whom you are

to take for your God in Christ. This is that Father who elected a select company of sinners unto salvation; this is that Son that redeemed them unto God by his blood; and this is that Spirit that renews and sanctifies them, making them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

3. Lastly, Take this Father for your Father, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and be obedient children, if ye would be reckoned of his seed. Receive the Son, and slight him not. Give your consent to the gospel-offer, seeing it is your Maker that offers to be your husband. And grieve not the Holy Spirit, lest ye be found fighters against God.

OF THE DECREES OF GOD

EPHES. 1:11.—According to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

THE apostle here gives an instance of the sovereign freedom of divine grace through Jesus Christ in the believing Jews.

1. There is here the high privilege they were advanced to, a right to the heavenly inheritance, which had been forfeited by the sin of man.

2. Through whom they had obtained it, in him; by virtue of the merits, the obedience and satisfaction of Christ.

3. Why they obtained it, while others had not. Not that they were more worthy than others, but because they were predestinated, elected, or fore-ordained to salvation, and all the means of it.

4. There is the certainty of the efficacy of predestination. It is according to his purpose; that is, his firm purpose and peremptory decree to bring such things to pass. And this certainly in particular is evinced by a general truth, Who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. Wherein we may notice.

(1.) God's effectual operation, he worketh. The word signifies to work powerfully and efficaciously, so as to overcome all contrary resistance, and all difficulties in the way; which is exactly God's way of working. And this working takes place in the works of creation and providence.

(2.) The manner how God works. The plan and scheme according to which his works are framed, is the counsel of his will. His will is his decree and intention; and it is called the counsel of his will, to denote the wisdom of his decrees, his most wise and free determination therein. As God's decree is an act of his will, and so most free,

considered in relation to the creatures; so his decree and will are never without counsel; he willeth or decreeth things to be done with the greatest reason and judgment, most wisely as well as freely.

(3.) The object of his working after this manner, all things. This cannot be restricted to the blessings which the apostle had been speaking of immediately before, but must be understood of all things whatsoever, and of all their motions and actions as such; which therefore are the object of God's decrees.

The text plainly affords this doctrine, viz.

DOCT. 'God hath fore-ordained, according to the counsel of his own will, whatsoever comes to pass.'

Here I shall,

- I. Explain the nature of a decree.
- II. Consider the object of God's decrees.
- III. Speak of the end of his decrees.
- IV. Touch at their properties.
- V. Make improvement.

I. I am to explain the nature of a decree. The text calls it a purpose, a will. For God to decree is to purpose and fore-ordain, to will and appoint that a thing shall be or not be. And such decrees must needs be granted, seeing God is absolutely perfect, and therefore nothing can come to pass without his will; seeing there is an absolute and necessary dependence of all things and persons on God as the first cause. But there is a vast difference betwixt the decrees of God and men; whereof this is the principal: Men's purposes or decrees are distinct from themselves, but the decrees of God are not distinct from himself. God's decrees are nothing else but God himself, who is

one simple act; and they are many only in respect of their objects, not as they are in God; even as the one heat of the sun melts wax and hardens clay. To say otherwise is to derogate from the absolute simplicity of God, and to make him a compound being. It is also to derogate from his infinite perfection; for whatsoever is added to any thing argues a want, which is made up by the accession of that thing, and so introduces a change; but God is absolutely unchangeable. Neither could God's decrees be eternal, if it were not so; for there is nothing eternal but God.

II. I proceed to consider the object of God's decrees. This is whatsoever comes to pass. He worketh all things, says the text. God has decreed whatsoever comes to pass; and nothing comes to pass but what he has decreed to come to pass. We may consider the extent of the divine decree under the three following heads.

1. God has decreed the creation of all things that have a being.
2. He has decreed to rule and govern the creatures which he was to make.
3. He has decreed the eternal state of all his rational creatures.

First, God decreed to rear up this stately fabric of the world, the heavens and the earth, the sea and the land, with all the great variety of creatures which inhabit them. There are myriads of holy angels in heaven, cherubim and seraphim, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, angels and archangels. There are many shining luminaries in the firmament, the sun, and the moon, and innumerable glittering stars. There is a great variety of creatures on the earth, animals, plants, trees, and minerals, with various forms, shapes, colours, smells, virtues, and qualities. The sea is inhabited by many creatures, Psal. 104:25. Now, God decreed to make all these things, Rev. 4:11. 'Thou hast created all things.'

Secondly, God hath decreed the government of all his creatures. He preserves and upholds them in their beings, and he guides and

governs them in all their motions and actions. He is not only the general spring and origin of all the motions and actions of the creatures, but he appoints and orders them all immediately.

1. He has decreed all their motions and actions: 'For (says the apostle) of him, and through him, and to him, are all things.' Rom. 11 ult. This is clear from God's knowing all these things before they come to pass; which knowledge of them must needs be in the decree, upon which the coming to pass of all things depends.

Not only good things, but evil things fall within the compass of his holy decree. Evils of punishment are truly good, being the execution of justice, as it is good in a magistrate to punish evildoers. God owns himself to be the author of these evils, Amos 3:6. 'Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?' And yet he has decreed the effecting of these. As for the evils of sin, these also fall within the compass of the decree of God, as is clear in the case of crucifying Christ, Acts 2:23. 'Him (says the apostle to the Jews) being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.' And says the apostle, Acts 4:27, 28. 'For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.' This appears also in the case of Pharaoh refusing to let Israel go, and pursuing them when they had gone, whose heart God hardened, Exod. 14:4; and in the sin of Joseph's brethren in selling him into Egypt; of which Joseph says, Gen. 45:8. 'So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.' It is true, God decreed not the effecting of sin, for then he should have been the author of it, but he decreed the permission of sin. And though sin in itself is evil, yet God's permitting it is good, seeing he can bring good out of it; and it is just in him to permit it, where he is not bound to hinder it. Yet this is not a naked permission, whereby the thing may either come to pass or not, but such as infers a certainty of the event, so that in respect of the event the sin cannot but come to pass. Hence our Lord says,

Matth. 18:7. 'Wo unto the world because of offences;. for it must needs be that offences come.' And says the apostle, 1 Cor. 11:19. 'There must be heresies among you.' See also Acts 4:27, 28 forecited.

2. And not only necessary things, as the burning of the fire, but the most free acts of the creature, and the most casual things, fall under the divine decree. Free acts, as Prov. 20:1. 'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.' To this purpose are the foresaid instances of the Jews, Pharoah, and Joseph's brethren.—The most casual, as in the case of the casual slaughter mentioned, Exod. 21:12, 13, and Deut. 19:3 where mention is made of the Lord's delivering the person slain into the hands of the slayer, though he had no intention to slay him. Such also is the case of lots, Prov. 16:33. 'The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.' This holds also in the case of sparrows, and the hairs of the head falling, which cannot be done without God, Matth. 10:29, 30. And thus not only great things, but small things fall within the compass of the divine decree.

But more especially let us consider God's decrees with respect to the government of rational creatures. This we may take up in the following particulars.

1. God has decreed what kingdoms and monarchies should be on the earth, what princes and potentates should rule and govern them, and whether their government should be mild or tyrannical; how long each kingdom should continue, when they should have peace and when war, when prosperity and adversity. We find wonderful discoveries made to Daniel with respect to these things.

2. God has decreed every thing relating to the lot and condition of particular persons.

(1.) He has decreed the time and place of their birth, whether it should be under the law or gospel, in a land of light or darkness; whether among the savage Indians in America, or among the more

polite and civilized people of Europe; whether among Mahometans, Papists, or Protestants. All this was decreed by the Lord, who 'hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation,' Acts 17:26.

(2.) He hath decreed every man's lot and condition, whether it shall be high or low, rich or poor, noble or ignoble, learned or unlearned. He hath determined the trade and employment they should follow, the particular business they should betake themselves to. Many times God's providence over-rules men's purposes and designs, for fulfilling his own counsels. Matters are sometimes strangely wheeled about, so that not what we or our parents designed, but what God hath purposed shall take place. Amos was meanly employed at first, but God designed him for a more honourable calling: he was taken from the office of a herdman, and gatherer of sycamore fruit, and invested with a commission to prophesy to the people of Israel, Amos 7:14, 15. David followed the ewes, and it is like never raised his thoughts to higher things in the days of his youth; but God made him the royal shepherd of a better flock, Psal. 78:70, 71. The most part of the apostles were fishermen; but Christ called them to a more high and eminent station, even to be extraordinary officers in his church, and fishers of men.

(3.) God hath decreed what relations men shall have in the world. Their wives and children are appointed for them. Hence said Abraham's servant, Gen. 24:44. 'Let the same be the woman whom the Lord hath appointed for my master's son.' That such a woman rather than any other, should be wife, to such a man, is by the appointment of Heaven. Men's children are also decreed by God. Hence said Eve, Gen. 4:24. 'God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.' And says the Psalmist, Psal. 127:3. 'Lo children are the heritage of the Lord.' God determines the numbers and names of every man's children.

(4.) All the comforts of men's lives are under the divine appointment, both those temporal and spiritual. Hence says the prophet, Isa. 26:1. 'We have a strong city: salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.'

(5.) All men's afflictions are determined by a decree of Heaven, Micah 6:9. 'Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.' Such are public calamities and distresses, as war, famine and pestilence, all bodily pains and sickness, poverties and pinching straits, and whatever is grievous and afflictive to men. None of these spring out of the dust, or come by chance. The kind and nature of people's troubles, their measure and degree, time and season, continuance and duration, and all the circumstances of them, are determined, and weighed in the scale of his eternal counsel. Hence says the apostle, 1 Thess. 3:3. 'No man should be moved by these afflictions: for you yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.'

(6.) The time of every man's life in the world is appointed. Hence says Job, chap. 7:1. 'Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?' And says the same great man, chap. 14:5. 'His days are determined: and the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.' The term of our life is fixed and limited, our days are determined, and our months numbered. Hence David prays, Psal. 39:4. 'Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am.' Our days are measured; they are as the days of an hireling. As the hireling hath a set time to work in, so every man and woman hath an appointed time for acting and working in this world. We are all pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and in a little time we must go hence and be no more. We are here like men upon a stage to act our parts, and in a short time we must retire within the curtain of death, and others will come in our room. Our glass is continually running, and the day and hour in which it will run out is settled and fixed by the order of Heaven. We find in scripture that God hath often foretold the precise term of particular men's lives. He set a hundred and twenty years to

those who lived in the old world before the flood came upon them, Gen. 6:3. He foretold the time of Moses' life, of that of Jeroboam's son, of that of Ahaziah king of Israel, and of many others. All this was from his own decree and counsel.

Thirdly, God hath determined the eternal state of all his rational creatures, both men and angels. Our Confession of Faith tells us, agreeably to scripture, chap. 3 art. 3 that 'by the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others are fore-ordained to everlasting death.' More particularly,

1. We read of the elect angels, 1 Tim. 5:21. The perseverance and standing of the holy angels in the state of their primitive integrity, and their confirmation therein, was determined by the purpose of God. In the morning of the creation heaven shined with innumerable glittering stars, the angels of light, of whom a vast number are, by their rebellion against God, become wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Now, the good angels are in a supernatural state, without the least danger of change, or any separation from the blessed presence of God in glory, flowing from the continual irradiations of divine grace, which preserves their minds from errors, and their wills from irregular desires; and consequently they cannot sin, nor forfeit their felicity.

It was by an eternal decree of God, that he passed by the angels that fell, and doomed them to everlasting misery. The apostle tells us, 2 Pet. 2:4 that 'God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved into judgment.' And saith Jude, ver. 6. 'The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.' Mercy did not interpose to avert or suspend their judgment; but immediately they were expelled from the Divine Presence. Their present misery is insupportable, and worse awaits them. Their judgment is irreversible; they are under the blackness of

darkness for ever. They have not the least glimpse of hope to allay their sorrows, and no star-light to sweeten the horrors of their eternal night. It were a kind of mercy to them to be capable of death; but God will never be so far reconciled to them as to annihilate them. Immortality, which is the privilege of their nature, infinitely increases their torment.

2. God hath likewise appointed the final and eternal state of men and women. It is said, Rom. 9:21, 22, 23. 'Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?'

(1.) He hath elected some to everlasting life by an irreversible decree, Rom. 8:29, 30. 'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.' Eph. 1:4. 'According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.' 2 Thess. 2:13. (God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.' From eternity God elected some from among the lost posterity of Adam to everlasting life and glory, according to the good pleasure of his own will. Therefore all is referred by our Saviour to the good pleasure of God, Matth. 11:25, 26. And all the means for accomplishing the ends of election are likewise of divine appointment; particularly the redemption of ruined sinners by the death and sufferings of Christ: 'He hath chosen us in Christ,' Eph. 1:4. The Father did first, in the order of nature, chuse Christ to the Mediatory office, and as the chief corner-stone to bear up the whole building; whence he is called God's elect, Isa. 42:1. And then he chose a company of lost sinners to be

saved by and through Christ; and therefore he is said to predestinate them to be conformed to the image of his Son.

(2.) God hath passed by the rest of mankind, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, and hath ordained them to dishonour and wrath for their sins, to the praise of his glorious justice. Hence Christ is said to be 'a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to them that stumble at the word being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed,' 1 Pet. 2:8. 'The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold, and of silver, but also of wood, and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour,' 2 Tim. 2:19, 20. In Jude, ver. 4 we read of 'ungodly men, who were before of old ordained to condemnation.' And in Rom. 9:22, 23 we read of 'vessels of mercy, which God had afore prepared unto glory: and of vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.'

III. I come to consider the end of God's decrees. And this is no other than his own glory. Every rational agent acts for an end; and God being the most perfect agent, and his glory the highest end, there can be no doubt but all his decrees are directed to that end. 'For—to him are all things,' Rom. 11:36. 'That we should be to the praise of his glory,' Eph. 1:12. In all, he aims at his glory: and seeing he aims at it, he gets it even from the most sinful actions he has decreed to permit. Either the glory of his mercy or of his justice he draws therefrom. Infinite wisdom directs all to the end intended. More particularly,

1. This was God's end in the creation of the world. The divine perfections are admirably glorified here, not only in regard of the greatness of the effect, which comprehends the heavens and the earth, and all things therein; but in regard of the marvellous way of its production. For he made the vast universe without the concurrence of any material cause; he brought it forth from the

womb of nothing by an act of his efficacious will. And as he began the creation by proceeding from nothing to real existence, so in forming the other parts he drew them from infirm and indisposed matter, as from a second nothing, that all his creatures might bear the signatures of infinite power. Thus he commanded light to arise out of darkness, and sensible creatures from an insensible element. The lustre of the divine glory appears eminently here. Hence says David, Psal. 19:1. 'The heavens declare the glory of God.' They declare and manifest to the world the attributes and perfections of their great Creator, even in his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power. All the creatures have some prints of God stamped upon them, whereby they loudly proclaim and shew to the world his wisdom and goodness in framing them. Hence says Paul, Rom. 1:20. 'The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.'

2. The glory of God was his chief end and design in making men and angels. The rest of the creatures glorified God in an objective way, as they are evidences and manifestations of his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power. But this higher rank of beings are endued with rational faculties, and so are capable to glorify God actively. Hence it is said, Prov. 16:4. 'The Lord hath made all things for himself.' If all things were made for him, then man and angels especially, who are the master-pieces of the whole creation. We have our rise and being from the pure fountain of God's infinite power and goodness; and therefore we ought to run towards that again, till we empty all our faculties and excellencies into that same ocean of divine goodness.

3. This is likewise the end of election and predestination. For 'he hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children, to the praise of the glory of his grace.' That some are ordained to eternal life, and others passed by, and suffered to perish eternally in their sin, is for the manifestation of the infinite perfections and excellencies of God. The glory and beauty of the divine attributes is displayed here with a shining lustre; as his sovereign authority and dominion over all his creatures to dispose of them to what ends and purposes he pleaseth;

his knowledge and omniscience, in beholding all things past, present, and to come; his vindictive justice, in ordaining punishments to men, as a just retribution for sin; and his omnipotence, in making good his word, and putting all his threatenings in execution. The glory of his goodness shines likewise here, in making choice of any, when all most justly deserved to be rejected. And his mercy shines here with an amiable lustre, in receiving and admitting all who believe in Jesus into his favour.

4. This was the end that God proposed in that great and astonishing work of redemption. In our redemption by Christ we have the fullest, clearest, and most delightful manifestation of the glory of God that ever was or shall be in this life. All the declarations and manifestations that we have of God's glory in the works of creation and common providence, are but dim and obscure in comparison with what is here. Indeed the glory of his wisdom, power, and goodness, is clearly manifested in the works of creation. But the glory of his mercy and love had lain under an eternal eclipse without a Redeemer. God had in several ages of the world pitched upon particular seasons to manifest and discover one or other particular property of his nature. Thus his justice was declared in his drowning the old world with a deluge of water, and burning Sodom with fire from heaven. His truth and power were clearly manifested in freeing the Israelites from the Egyptian chains, and bringing them out from that miserable bondage. His truth was there illustriously displayed in performing a promise which had lain dormant for the space of 430 years, and his power in quelling his implacable enemies by the meanest of his creatures. Again, the glory of one attribute is more seen in one work than in another: in some things there is more of his goodness, in other things more of his wisdom is seen, and in others more of his power. 'But in the work of redemption all his perfections and excellencies shine forth in their greatest glory. And this is the end that God proposed in their conversion and regeneration. Hence it is said, Isa. 43:21. 'This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise.' Sinners are adopted into God's family, and made a royal priesthood on this very design,' 1 Pet. 2:9.

IV. I come now to consider the properties of God's decrees.

1. They are eternal. God makes no decrees in time, but they were all from eternity. So the decree of election is said to have been 'before the foundation of the world,' Eph. 1:4. Yea whatever he doth in time, was decreed by him, seeing it was known to him before time, Acts 15:18. 'Known unto God are all his works from the beginning.' And this foreknowledge is founded on the decree. If the divine decrees were not eternal, God would not be most perfect and unchangeable, but, like weak man, should take new counsels, and would be unable to tell every thing that were to come to pass.

2. They are most wise, 'according to the counsel of his will.' God cannot properly deliberate or take counsel, as men do; for he sees all things together and at once. And thus his decrees are made with perfect judgment, and laid in the depth of wisdom, Rom. 11:33. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God I how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' So that nothing is determined that could have been better determined.

3. They are most free, according to the counsel of his own will; depending on no other, but all flowing from the mere pleasure of his own will, Rom. 11:34. 'For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?' Whatsoever he decreeth to work without himself, is from his free choice. So his decrees are all absolute, and there are none of them conditional. He has made no decrees suspended on any condition without himself. Neither has he decreed any thing because he saw it would come to pass, or as that which would come to pass on such or such conditions; for then they should be no more according to the counsel of his will, but the creature's will. For God's decrees being eternal, cannot depend upon a condition which is temporal. They are the determinate counsels of God, but a conditional decree determines nothing. Such conditional decrees are inconsistent with the infinite wisdom of God, and are in

men only the effects of weakness; and they are inconsistent with the independency of God, making them depend on the creature.

4. They are unchangeable. They are the unalterable laws of heaven. God's decrees are constant; and he by no means alters his purpose, as men do, Psal. 33:11. 'The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.' Hence they are compared to mountains of brass, Zech. 6:1. As nothing can escape his first view, so nothing can be added to his knowledge. Hence Balaam said, 'God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' Numb. 23:19. The decree of election is irreversible: The foundation of God, (says the apostle), standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his,' 2 Tim. 2:19.

5. They are most holy and pure. For as the sun darts its beams upon a dunghill, and yet is no way defiled by it; so God decrees the permission of sin, as above explained, yet is not the author of sin: 1 John 1:5. 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all,' Jam. 1:13, 17. 'God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.'

6. Lastly, They are effectual; that is, whatsoever God decrees comes to pass infallibly, Isa. 46:10. 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.' He cannot fall short of what he has determined. Yet the liberty of second causes is not hereby taken away; for the decree of God offers no violence to the creature's will; as appears from the free and unforced actings of Joseph's brethren, Pharoah, the Jews that crucified Christ, &c. Nor does it take away the contingency of second causes, either in themselves or as to us, as appears by the lot cast into the lap. Nay they are thereby established, because he hath efficaciously foreordained that such effects shall follow on such causes.

Before proceeding to the application of this doctrine, it may not be improper to answer some objections which are brought against the

doctrine of the divine decrees.

1. It is objected by some, that if all things that come to pass in time be appointed of God by an irreversible decree, then this seems to make God the author of sin, as if he had ordained that horrid and hateful evil to come into the world, which is so dishonourable to himself, and so destructive to the children of men. In answer to this, you must know,

1. That all sinful actions fall under the divine decree. Though sin itself flows from transgressing the law, yet the futurition of it is from the decree of God. No such thing could ever have been in the world, if it had not been determined by the eternal counsel of Heaven for a holy and just end. This is plainly asserted by the apostle Peter, with respect to the greatest villainy that was ever committed on the earth, namely, the death and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, at the hands of sinful men, Acts 2:23 forecited. And the church gives this account of it, Acts 4:27, 28. 'For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand, and thy counsel determined before to be done.' There was never such an atrocious crime or higher act of wickedness committed, than the murdering of the Lord of glory. And yet it appears from these texts of scripture, that, in this bloody and horrid scene, wicked men did no more than God's hand and counsel determined before to be done.

2. That the decree of God is properly distinguished into that which is effective, and that which is permissive.

(1.) His effective decree respects all the good that comes to pass, whether it be moral or natural goodness. All the actions and motions of the creatures have a natural goodness in them; and even sinful actions considered abstractly from any irregularity, obliquity, or deformity cleaving to them, have a natural goodness in them, so far as they are actions: they have a goodness of being considered purely

and simply as actions. Now, God has decreed to effect all these, yea even sinful actions considered purely as natural. For he is the first and universal cause of all things, the fountain and original of all good. And it is said with respect to the oppressions of the church by wicked men, Psal. 115:3. 'Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he pleased.'

(2.) His permissive decree doth only respect the irregularity and pravity that is in sinful actions. God decreed to permit the same, or he determined it to be, himself permitting it. Hence it is said, Acts 14:16. 'In times past he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.' And God doth nothing in time, but what he did from eternity decree to do. So that the futurition of sin is from the decree of God. God determined that it should be. He did not decree to have any efficiency in sin, considered as such; but he willed that it should be done, himself permitting it. The counsel of God did not determine to do it, but that it should be done.

3. God decreed the permission of sin for great and glorious ends. It is true, sin in its own nature has no tendency to any good end. If it end in any good, it is from the overruling providence of God, and that infinite divine skill that can bring good out of evil, as well as light out of darkness. Now, the great and glorious end for which God decreed the after-being of sin, is his own glory: and the ends subordinate thereunto are not a few. Particularly, God decreed the futurition of sin, (1.) That he might have occasion of glorifying his infinite wisdom, love, and grace in the redemption and salvation of a company of lost sinners through the death and sufferings of his own dear Son. (2.) That his patience and long suffering in bearing with and forbearing sinners, might be magnified, admired, and adored. (3.) That he might be honoured and glorified by the faith and repentance of his people, and their walking humbly with him. (4.) That his justice might be illustriously displayed and glorified in the eternal damnation of reprobate sinners for their own sins and abominations, sin being the cause of their damnation, though not of their reprobation. Thus God decreed the futurition of sin for these

holy and wise ends, that he might glorify his wisdom in bringing good out of so great an evil, and a greater good than the evil he decreed to permit.

4. The decree of God about the permission of sin does not infringe the liberty of man's will. For sin doth not follow the decree by a necessity of co-action or compulsion, which indeed would destroy human liberty; but by a necessity of infallibility, which is very consistent with it. It is sufficient unto human liberty, or the freedom of man's will, that a man act without all constraint, and out of choice. Now, this is not taken away by the decree. Men sin as freely as if there were no decree, and yet as infallibly as if there were no liberty. And men sin, not to fulfil God's decree, which is hid from them, but to serve and gratify their vile lusts and corrupt affections.

Object. 2. If God hath determined the precise number of every man's days by an unalterable decree, then the use of means for the preservation of our health and lives is altogether unnecessary; for nothing can frustrate the divine decree. We will certainly live as long as God hath appointed us, whether we use any means or not. And therefore when we are hungry, we need not eat and drink; and when we are sick, we need not take physic, or use any medicines.

In answer to this, you must know, that as God hath decreed the end, so he hath decreed the means that are proper for attaining that end; so that these two must not be separated. Though God hath decreed how long we shall live, yet seeing it is his ordinary way to work by means, and he hath commanded and enjoined the use of them to men, therefore it is still our duty to use lawful means for preserving our life and health, and to wait on God in the due use of them, referring the event to his wise determination. In Paul's dangerous voyage to Rome, an angel of the Lord assured him, that God had given him all that sailed with him in the ship; and Paul assured them from the Lord, that there should be no loss of any of their lives: yet when some were about to flee out of the ship, he says to the centurion who had the command, 'Except these abide in the ship,

you cannot be saved,' Acts 27:31. And he exhorted them to take some meat after their long abstinence, telling them, that it was for their health. From which it plainly appears, that as God had decreed to save their lives, so he had decreed to save them in the due use of ordinary means; so that they were to use means for the preservation of their life and health. And when Hezekiah was recovered from a mortal disease, and received a promise from God that he should have fifteen years added to his days, and the promise was confirmed by a sign, the miraculous going back of the sun, he did not neglect or cast off the use of means: but, as was prescribed by the prophet, he applied a bunch of dried figs to his sore, and used still his ordinary diet. Therefore it is gross ignorance and madness in men to reason so against God's decrees. The Lord, by an unchangeable counsel and purpose, hath decreed and set down all things, and how they shall come to pass; and therefore it is a wrong way of arguing for people to say, If God hath determined how long I shall live, then I shall not die sooner, though I never eat or drink.

Object. 3. If God hath determined the eternal state and condition of men, whether they shall be happy or miserable for ever, then it is in vain to repent and believe, or use any means for their own safety. For if God hath elected them to salvation, they shall certainly be saved, whether they use any means or not; and if they are not elected to everlasting life, all that they can possibly do will be to no purpose at all, for they shall never be saved by it.

For answer to this, you must know,

1. That God's decree of election is a great secret, which we ought not to pry into. It is simply impossible for men to know whether they are elected or not, before they believe. Indeed, if a man were certain that he is not elected to eternal life, it would be another case: but as it is not certain that thou art elected, so it is not certain that thou art not elected. You have no means to know either the one or the other certainly, till you get saving faith. Till then the Lord reserves it in his own breast, as a secret which we are not to pry into. For it is said,

Deut. 29:29. 'Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children, that we may do all the things of his law.' Here the Lord shews what belongs to him and what belongs to us, and that we should mind our duty, and not busy and perplex ourselves about impertinencies. Whether men be elected or not elected, is a secret that God never discloses to an unbeliever; but that we should believe on Christ is no secret. This is a duty clearly revealed and enjoined by the gospel.

2. It is our duty to look to God's commands, and not to his decrees; to our own duty, and not to his purposes. The decrees of God are a vast ocean, into which many possibly have curiously pried to their own horror and despair; but few or none have ever pried into them to their own profit and satisfaction. Our election is not written in particular in the word of God; but our duty is plainly set down there. If men conscientiously perform their duty, this is the way to come to the knowledge of their election. Men therefore should not question whether they be elected or not, but first believe on Christ, and endeavour diligently to work out their own salvation; and if their works be good, and their obedience true, thereby they will come to a certain knowledge that they were elected and set apart to everlasting life.

3. As God elects to the end, so he elects also to the means. Now, faith and obedience are the means and way to salvation; and therefore, if you be elected to salvation, you are also elected to faith and obedience. See what is said to this purpose, 2 Thess. 2:13. 'God hath chosen you to salvation,' there is the end; 'through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth,' there is the means which lead to that end. Both are decreed by God. If therefore you heartily and sincerely believe and obey, then your election to salvation stands firm and sure. Nay, further, the scriptures make election to be terminated as well in obedience as salvation. So 1 Pet. 1:2. 'Elect (says the apostle) unto obedience, through sanctification of the Spirit.' In the former place it was, 'elect to salvation through sanctification;' but here it is, elect to obedience through

sanctification;' to denote unto us, that none are elected unto salvation but those that are elected unto obedience. And therefore it is unreasonable, yea, it is contradictory to say, if I am elected, I shall be saved, whether I believe and obey or not; for none are elected to salvation but through faith and obedience.

4. Men do not pry into the decrees of God in other things, but do what they know to be incumbent upon them as their duty. And certainly it is as unreasonable here. When you are dangerously sick, and the physician tells you, that unless you take such and such medicines, your case is desperate; you do not use to reason thus, Then if God hath decreed my recovery, I will certainly be restored to my health, whether I take that course of physic or not; but you presently fall in with the advice given you, and make use of the means prescribed for your health. And will you not do so here? you are dangerously sick and mortally wounded with sin, and God commands you to flee to Christ the only physician that can cure you, and cast yourselves upon him, and you shall certainly be saved. But O, says the sinner, if I knew that God had decreed my salvation, I would venture on Christ; but till once I know this, I must not believe: O how unreasonable is unbelief! The devil's suggestions make poor creatures act as if they were entirely distracted and out of their wits. This is just as if an Israelite stung with the fiery serpents should have said, If I knew that the Lord had decreed my cure, I would look upon the brazen serpent, and if he hath decreed it, I will certainly recover whether I look to it or not. If all the stung Israelites had been thus resolved, it is likely they had all perished. Or this is as if one pursued by the avenger of blood, should have set himself down in the way to the city of refuge, where he should have been flying for his life, and said, If God hath decreed my escape, then I will be safe whether I run to the city of refuge or not; but if he hath not decreed it, then it is in vain for me to go thither. Now, would not men count this a wilful casting away of his life, with a careless neglect of that provision which God hath made to save it? Was it not sufficient that a way was made for his escape, and a way feasible enough, the city of refuge being always open? Thus the arms of Christ are always open to

receive and embrace poor humbled perishing sinners fleeing to him for help. And will men destroy themselves by suffering Satan to entangle them with a needless, impertinent, and unreasonable scruple? In other cases, if there be no way but one, and any encouraging probability to draw men into it, they run into it without delay, not perplexing and discouraging themselves with the decrees of God. Now, this is thy case, O sinner; Christ is the way, the truth, and the life; there is no other by whom you can be saved; flee to him then as for thy life; and let not Satan hinder thee, by diverting thee to impossibilities and impertinencies. Comply with the call and offer of the gospel. This is present and pertinent duty, and trouble not thyself about the secrets of God.

I conclude all with a few inferences.

1. Has God decreed all things that come to pass? Then there is nothing that falls out by chance, nor are we to ascribe what we meet with either to good or ill luck and fortune. There are many events in the world which men look upon as mere accidents, yet all these come by the counsel and appointment of Heaven. Solomon tells us, Prov. 16:33 that 'the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is from the Lord.' However casual and fortuitous things may be with respect to us, yet they are all determined and directed by the Lord. When that man drew a bow at a venture, 1 Kings 22:34 it was merely accidental with respect to him, yet it was God that guided the motion of the arrow so as to smite the king of Israel rather than any other man. Nothing then comes to pass, however casual and uncertain it may seem to be, but what was decreed by God.

2. Hence we see God's certain knowledge of all things that happen in the world, seeing his knowledge is founded on his decree. As he sees all things possible in the glass of his own power, so he sees all things to come in the glass of his own will; of his effecting will, if he hath decreed to produce them; and of his permitting will, if he hath decreed to suffer them. Hence his declaration of things to come is founded on his appointing them, Isa. 44:7. 'Who, as I, shall call, and

shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming and shall come? let them shew unto them.' He foreknows the most necessary things according to the course of nature, because he decreed that such effects should proceed from and necessarily follow such and such causes: and he knows all future contingents, all things which shall fall out by chance, and the most free actions of rational creatures, because he decreed that such things should come to pass contingently or freely, according to the nature of second causes. So that what is casual or contingent with respect to us, is certain and necessary in regard of God.

3. Whoever be the instruments of any good to us, of whatever sort, we must look above them, and eye the hand and counsel of God in it, which is the first spring, and be duly thankful to God for it. And whatever evil of crosses or afflictions befalls us, we must look above the instruments of it to God. Affliction doth not rise out of the dust or come to men by chance; but it is the Lord that sends it, and we should own and reverence his hand in it. So did David in the day of his extreme distress. 2 Sam. 16:11. 'Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him.' We should be patient under whatever distress befalls us, considering that God is our party, Job 2:10. 'Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' This would be a happy means to still our quarreling at adverse dispensations. Hence David says, 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it,' Psal 39:9.

4. See here the evil of murmuring and complaining at our lot in the world. How apt are ye to quarrel with God, as if he were in the wrong when his dealings with you are not according to your own desires and wishes? You demand a reason, and call God to an account, Why am I thus? why so much afflicted and distressed? why so long afflicted? and why such an affliction rather than another? why am I so poor and another so rich? Thus your hearts rise up against God. But you should remember, that this is to defame the counsels of infinite wisdom, as if God had not ordered your affairs wisely enough

in his eternal counsel. We find the Lord reproving Job for this, chap. 40:2. 'shall he that contendeth with the Lord instruct him?' When ye murmur and repine under cross and afflictive dispensations, this is a presuming to instruct God how to deal with you, and to reprove him as if he were in the wrong. Yea, there is a kind of implicit blasphemy in it, as if you had more wisdom and justice to dispose of your lot, and to carve out your own portion in the world. This is upon the matter the language of such a disposition, Had I been on God's counsel, I had ordered this matter better; things had not been with me as now they are. O presume not to correct the infinite wisdom of God, seeing he has decreed all things most wisely and judiciously.

5. There is no reason for people to excuse their sins and falls, from the doctrine of the divine decrees. Wicked men, when they commit some villainy or atrocious crime, are apt to plead thus for their excuse, Who can help it? God would have it so; it was appointed for me before I was born, so that I could not avoid it. This is a horrid abuse of the divine decrees, as if they did constrain men to sin: Whereas the decree is an immanent act of God, and so can have no influence, physical or moral upon the wills of men, but leaves them to the liberty and free choice of their own hearts; and what sinners do, they do most freely and of choice. It is a horrid and detestable wickedness to cast the blame of your sin upon God's decree. This is to charge your villainy upon him, as if he were the author of it. It is great folly to cast your sins upon Satan who tempted you, or upon your neighbour who provoked you; but it is a far greater sin, nay horrid blasphemy, to cast it upon God himself. A greater affront than this cannot be offered to the infinite holiness of God.

6. Lastly, Let the people of God comfort themselves in all cases by this doctrine of the divine decrees; and, amidst whatever befalls them, rest quietly and submissively in the bosom of God, considering that whatever comes or can come to pass, proceeds from the decree of their gracious friend and reconciled Father, who knows what is best for them, and will make all things work together for their good. O what a sweet and pleasant life would ye have under the heaviest

pressures of affliction, and what heavenly serenity and tranquillity of mind would you enjoy, would you cheerfully acquiesce in the good will and pleasure of God, and embrace every dispensation, how sharp soever it may be, because it is determined and appointed for you by the eternal counsel of his will!

OF THE WORK OF CREATION

HEB. 11:3.—Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

HAVING discoursed to you of the decrees of God, whereby he hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, I come now to treat of the execution of these decrees. That question, 'How doth God execute his decrees?' being only an introduction to what follows, it is needless to insist on it. Only you must know, that for God to execute his decrees, is to bring to pass what he has decreed. Now, what God from all eternity decreed is brought to pass in the works of creation and providence. Nothing falls out in either of these but what was decreed; nor does it fall out in any other way than as it was decreed. The decrees of God are as it were the scheme, draught and pattern of the house; and the works of creation and providence are the house, built in every point conformable to the draught.

In the text we have an answer to that question, 'What is the work of creation?' Wherein, we may consider,

1. What we understand about it. (1.) The making of the world; it was framed, and had a beginning, not being from eternity. (2.) The author and efficient cause of it, God. (3.) What God made, the worlds; all things, heaven, earth, sea, air, &c. and all the inhabitants thereof, angels, men, cattle, fowls, fishes, &c. (4.) How they were

made, by the word of God, that word of power which spake all things, into being. Or it may denote Jesus Christ, who is called the word of God, and by whom God made the worlds. (5.) Whereof they were made. This is declared negatively, Things which are seen were not made of things which do appear, that is, not of pre-existent matter, but of nothing. By things that are seen may be understood visible corporeal things; and if these were made of nothing, much more things that are not seen. But I rather understand it of all things which are seen to have a being; for that word relates to the eyes of the understanding, as well as of the body.

2. How we understand this creation of the world, through faith. Not that we can understand nothing of the creation by the light of nature; for the eternity of the world is contrary to reason as well as faith; but we have the full and certain knowledge of this work of creation in the particular circumstances of it, through faith assenting to divine revelation, and no other way.

In speaking to this work of creation I shall shew,

I. What we are to understand by creation.

II. That the world was made, or had a beginning.

III. Who made it.

IV. What God made.

V. Whereof all things were made.

VI. How they were made.

VII. In what space of time they were made.

VIII. For what end God made all things.

IX. In what case or condition he made them.

X. Deduce some inferences from the whole.

I. I am to show what we are to understand by creation, or what it is to create.

1. It is not to be taken here in a large sense, as sometimes it is used in scripture, for any production of things wherein second causes have their instrumentality; as when it is said, Psal. 104:30. 'Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth.' Where the meaning is, thou sendest forth thy quickening power, which produceth life in the creatures from time to time: for the Psalmist speaks not here of the first creation, but of the continued and repeated production of living creatures, in which the divine power is the principal agent. But,

2. We are to take it strictly, for the production of things out of nothing, or the giving a being to things which had none before. And here you must know, that there is a twofold creation, one immediate, and the other mediate.

(1.) There is an immediate creation; as when things are brought forth out of pure nothing, where there was no pre-existent matter to work upon. Thus the heavens, the earth, the waters, and all the materials of inferior bodies, were made of nothing; and the souls of men are still produced from the womb of nothing by God's creative power, and infused into their bodies immediately by him, when they are fully organised to receive them.

(2.) There is a secondary and mediate creation, which is the making things of pre-existing matter, but of such as is naturally unfit and altogether indisposed for such productions, and which could never by any power of second causes be brought into such a form. Thus all beasts, cattle, and creeping things, and the body of man, were at first made of the earth, and the dust of the ground; and the body of the first woman was made of a rib taken out of the man. Now, this was a creation as well as the former; because, though there was matter here

to work upon, yet it could never have been reduced into such a form without the efficacy of Almighty power. We have an account of both these in the history of the creation. It is said, Gen. 1:1. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;' i. e, he made that mighty mass of matter out of nothing, which was at first a rude and indigested lump; for the earth was without form, and the heavens without light. And then by that same omnipotent power he reduced it into that beautiful order and disposition wherein it now appears to our view.

II. I go on to shew that the world was made, that it had a beginning and was not eternal. This the scripture plainly testifies, Gen. 1:1 above quoted. And this reason itself teacheth: for whatsoever is eternal, the being of it is necessary, and it is subject to no alteration. But we see this is not the case with the world; for it is daily undergoing alterations.

III. I am next to shew who made the world, and gave it a beginning. That was God and he only, Gen. 1:1. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' This will evidently appear from the following particulars.

1. The world could not make itself; for this would imply a horrid contradiction, namely, that the world was before it was; for the cause must always be before its effect. That which is not in being, can have no production; for nothing can act before it exists. As nothing hath no existence, so it hath no operation. There must therefore be something of real existence, to give a being to those things that are; and every second cause must be an effect of some other before it be a cause. To be and not to be at the same time, is a manifest contradiction, which would infallibly take place if any thing made itself. That which makes is always before that which is made, as is obvious to the most illiterate peasant. If the world were a creator, it must be before itself as a creature.

2. The production of the world could not be by chance. It was indeed the extravagant fancy of some ancient philosophers, that the original of the world was from a fortuitous concourse of atoms, which were in perpetual motion in an immense space, till at last a sufficient number of them met in such a happy conjunction as formed the universe in the beautiful order in which we now behold it. But it is amazingly strange how such a wild opinion, which can never be reconciled with reason, could ever find any entertainment in a human mind. Can any man rationally conceive, that a confused rout of atoms, of diverse natures and forms, and some so far distant from others, should ever meet in such a fortunate manner, as to form an entire world, so vast in the bigness, so distinct in the order, so united in the diversities of natures, so regular in the variety of changes, and so beautiful in the whole composure? Such an extravagant fancy as this can only possess the thoughts of a disordered brain.

3. God created all things, the world, and all the creatures that belong to it. He attributes this work to himself, as one of the peculiar glories of his Deity, exclusive of all the creatures. So we read, Isa. 44:24. 'I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.' Chap. 45:12. 'I have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.' Chap. 40:12, 13. 'Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand? and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? Job 9:8. 'Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea.' These are magnificent descriptions of the creating power of God, and exceed every thing of the kind that hath been attempted by the pens of the greatest sages of antiquity.—By this operation God is distinguished from all the false gods and fictitious deities which the blinded nations adored, and shews himself to be the true God. Jer. 10:11, 12. 'The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and

from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.' Psal. 96:5. 'All the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens.' Isa. 37:19. 'Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.' None could make the world but God, because creation is a work of infinite power, and could not be produced by any finite cause: For the distance between being and not being is truly infinite, which could not be removed by any finite agent, or the activity of all finite agents united.

This work of creation is common to all the three persons in the adorable Trinity. The Father is described in scripture as the Creator, 1 Cor. 8:6.—'The Father, of whom are all things.' The same prerogative belongs to the Son, John 1:3. 'All things were made by him (the Word, the Son); and without him was not any thing made that was made.' The same honour belongs to the Holy Ghost, as Job 26:13. 'By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens.' Chap. 33:4. 'The Spirit of God hath made me (says Elihu), and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.' All the three persons are one God; God is the Creator; and therefore all the external works and acts of the one God must be common to the three persons. Hence, when the work of creation is ascribed to the Father, neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit are excluded; but because, as the Father is the fountain of the Deity, so he is the fountain of divine works. The Father created from himself by the Son and the Spirit; the Son from the Father by the Spirit; and the Spirit from the Father and the Son; the manner or order of their working being according to the order of their subsisting. The matter may be conceived thus: All the three persons being one God, possessed of the same infinite perfections; the Father, the first in subsistence, willed the work of creation to be done by his authority: 'He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.'—In respect of immediate operation, it peculiarly belonged to the Son. For 'the Father created all things by Jesus Christ,' Eph. 3:9. And we are told, that 'all things were made by him,' John 3:3. This work in regard of disposition and ornament, doth

peculiarly belong to the Holy Ghost. So it is said, Gen. 1:2. 'The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,' to garnish and adorn the world, after the matter of it was formed. Thus it is also said, Job 26:13 above cited, 'By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens.'

IV. Our next province is to shew what God made. All things whatsoever, besides God, were created, Rev. 4:11. 'Thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they are and were created.' Col. 1:16. 'By him were all things created.' The evil of sin is no positive being, it being but a defect or want, and therefore is not reckoned among the things which God made, but owes its existence to the will of fallen angels and men. Devils being angels, are God's creatures; but God did not make them evil, or devils, but they made themselves so.

Those things that were made in the beginning were most properly created of God; but whatsoever is or will be produced in the world, is still made by God, not only in respect that the matter whereof they are made was created by him, but because he is the first cause of all things, without whom second causes could produce nothing; and whatever power one creature has of producing another, is from God. Hence Elihu says, as above cited, 'The Spirit of God hath made me;' though he was produced by the operation of second causes. And it is worth while to consider what David says on this head, Psal. 139:13–16. This clearly appears from the impotency of the creature to produce any thing according to nature, when God denies his concurrence. Hence we have a chain of causes described, Hos. 2:21, 22 where God is the first cause, and acts the same part in all other operations wherein creatures are concerned: 'I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel.' If it be asked, then, what did God make? I answer, he made every thing that has a being, this stately structure of the universe, and that vast variety of creatures that are in it, sin only excepted, which he permitted should take place, but had no hand in the effecting of it as such.

V. I proceed to shew of what all things were made. Of nothing; which does not denote any matter of which they were formed, but the term from which God brought them; when they had no being he gave them one. There was no pre-existent matter to make them of, nothing at all to work upon: for he 'made all things both visible and invisible,' Col. 1:16. Rom. 11:36. If then he made all things, he must needs have made them of nothing, unless he would say there was, besides God, something before there was any thing, which is a palpable contradiction. To create is properly to make a thing of nothing, to make a thing have an existence that had none before. Thus were the heavens and the earth made of nothing simply; that is, they began to exist, which they never did before. This is what is called immediate creation, as I shewed on the first head. But there is a mediate creation, as I also noticed, which is a producing of things from matter altogether unfit for the work, and which could never be disposed, but by an almighty power to be such a thing? Thus man's body was created of the dust, and this itself was created of nothing, and was utterly unfit for producing such a work without a superior agency.

VI. The sixth head is to shew, how all things were made of nothing. By the word of God's power. It was the infinite power of God that gave them a being; which power was exerted in his word, not a word properly spoken, but an act of his will commanding them to be, Gen. 1:3. God said, 'Let there be light and there was light,' Psal. 33:6, 9, 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made. He spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.' By his powerful word he called them from nothing to being, Rom. 4:17. 'God calleth those things which be not as though they were.' This is a notable evidence of infinite power, which with so great easiness as the speaking of a word, could raise up this glorious fabric of the world. An heathen philosopher considered this as a striking instance of the sublime, peculiar to the books of the Jewish legislator.

VII. Our next business is to shew in what space of time the world was created. It was not done in a moment, but in the space of six days, as

is clear from the narrative of Moses. It was as easy for God to have done it in one moment as in six days. But this method he took, that we might have that wisdom, goodness, and power that appeared in the work, distinctly before our eyes, and be stirred up to a particular and distinct consideration of these works, for commemoration of which a seventh day is appointed a sabbath of rest.

But although God did not make all things in one moment, yet we are to believe, that every particular work was done in a moment, seeing it was done by a word, or an act of the divine will, Psal. 33:9 forecited. No sooner was the divine will intimated, than the thing willed instantly took place.

In the space of these six days the angels were created; and it is not to be thought that they were brought into being before that period; for the scripture expressly asserts, that all things were created in that space, Exod. 20:11. And though Moses, Gen. 1 makes no express mention of the angels, yet, Gen. 2:1 he shews that they were created in one of these six days, as he mentions the host of the heavens and the earth; and it is certain, that in the host of heaven the angels are included, 1 Kings 22:19 where Micaiah the prophet says, 'I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven (which can be no other than the angels) standing by him.'

The works of the first day were, (1.) The highest heaven, the seat of the blessed, and that with the angels its inhabitants, who in Job 38:4–7 under the designation of 'morning stars and sons of God,' are said to have 'sang together, and shouted for joy,' when the foundations of the earth were laid, as being then made. (2.) The earth, that is, the mass of earth and water, which Moses says was without form and void; that is, without that beauty and order which it afterwards received, and destitute of inhabitants, and without furniture and use. (3.) The light, which was afterwards gathered together, and distributed into the body of the sun and stars.

The works of the second day were the firmament; that is, that expansion or vast space which extends itself from the surface of the earth to the utmost extremity of the visible heavens, which ver. 8. is called heaven, that is, the ærial heavens, the habitation of birds and fowls, through which they wing their way. This vast extension is called the firmament, because it is fixed in its proper place, without which it cannot be removed without force and violence. Another work of this day was the dividing of the waters above the firmament, that is, the clouds, from the waters as yet mixed with the earth, which were afterwards gathered together into seas, rivers, lakes, fountains, &c.

On the third day, the lower waters were gathered into certain hollow places, which formed the sea; and the dry land appeared, adorned with plants, trees, and herbs, which continue to be produced to this day.

On the fourth day, the sun, moon, and stars were made, to enlighten the world, and render it a beautiful place, which otherwise would have been an uncomfortable dungeon, and to distinguish the four seasons of the year.

On the fifth day, the fishes and fowls were made.

On the sixth day, all sorts of beasts, tame and wild, and creeping things were produced out of the earth; and last of all, man, male and female.

It is probable that the world was created in autumn, that season of the year in which generally things are brought to perfection for the use of man and beast. But this not being an article of faith, we need not insist upon it.

VIII. I come now to shew for what end God made all things. It was for his own glory, Prov. 16:4. 'The Lord hath made all things for himself,' Rom. 11:36. 'For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.' And there are these three attributes of God that especially

shine forth in this work of creation, namely, his wisdom, power, and goodness.

1. His wisdom eminently appears, (1.) In that after the heavens and their inhabitants were created, those things that have only being and not life, then those that have being and life, but not sense, then those that have being, life, and sense, but not reason, and last of all, man, having being, life, sense, and reason, were successively formed. 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.' (2.) In his appointing of every thing to its proper use, by the law of creation, Gen. 1. Hence the wisdom of God is celebrated in that work, Jer. 10:12.' He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.'

2. The power of God appeared, (1.) In creating all things by a word, which instantly produced the effect intended. (2.) In that he created plants, herbs, and trees, before the sun, moon, and stars, which now naturally are the causes of the earth's producing its fruits; as also light before them, for discovering their beauty and verdure.

3. His goodness appears, in that he first prepared the place before he brought in the inhabitants, first provided the food before the living creatures were made, and adorned and fitted all for the use of man, before he formed him.

IX. If it is asked, 'In what state were all things made? I answer, They were all very 'good,' Gen. 1:31. The goodness of the creature consists in its fitness for the use for which it was made. In this respect every thing answered exactly the end of its creation. Again, the goodness of things is their perfection; and so every thing was made agreeable to the idea thereof that was formed in the divine mind. There was not the least blemish or defect in the work; but every thing was beautiful, as it was the effect of infinite wisdom as well as almighty power. And God being the end of all, even natural things tend to him. (1.) Declaring his glory in an objective way, Psal. 19:1. (2.) Stirring us up

to seek him, and behold him as our chief good and portion, Acts 17:26, 27. Rom. 1:20. (3.) Sustaining our life, and serving man, that he might serve God, for which he was made very fit, in regard of the rich endowments of his mind, all pure, holy, and upright, 1 Cor. 10:31. All the sin and misery that is now in the world, by which its beauty is greatly marred, its goodness defaced, and disorder and irregularity so universally prevail, proceeded from Satan, and man's yielding to his temptations.

I shall shut up this subject with a few inferences.

1. God is a most glorious being, infinitely lovely and desirable, possessed of every perfection and excellency. He made all things, and bestowed upon them all the perfections and amiable qualities with which they are invested. So that there is no perfection in any of the creatures which is not in him in an eminent way, Psal. 94:9. 'He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?' Whatever excellency and beauty is in the creatures, is all from him; and sure it must be most excellent in the fountain.

2. God's glory should be our chief end. And seeing whatever we have is from him, it should be used and employed for him: For 'all things were created by him and for him,' Col. 1:16. Have we a tongue? It should be employed for him, to shew forth his praise; hands? they should do and work for him; life? it should be employed in his service; talents and abilities? they should be laid out for promoting his interest and honour; and, upon a proper call, we should be ready to suffer for him.

3. God is our Sovereign Lord Proprietor, and may do in us, on us, and by us, what he will: Rom. 9:20, 21. 'Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?' There is no reason to murmur and fret under the cross, or any afflicting dispensations, that he exercises us with. Should he destroy that being that he gave us, to

whom would he do wrong? As he gave it us freely, he may take it away, without any impeachment of his goodness and justice. May not God do with his own what he will?

4. We should use all the creatures we make use of with an eye to God, and due thankfulness to him, the giver; employing them for our use, and in our service, soberly and wisely, with hearts full of gratitude to our Divine Benefactor; considering they stand related to God as their Creator, and are the workmanship of his own hands. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving, 1 Tim. 4:4. They are not to be used to his dishonour, or the feeding of our base lusts and irregular appetites, but to fit us for and strengthen us in the performance of our duty to him.

5. There is no case so desperate, but faith may get sure footing with respect to it in the power and word of God. Let the people of God be ever so low, they can never be lower than when they were not at all. Hence the Lord says, Isa. 65:18. 'Be glad and rejoice,' &c. He spoke a word and so the creature was made at first; and it will cost him but a word to make it over again. Hence Christ is called 'the beginning of the creation of God,' Rev. 3:14. O seek to be new-made by him; that old things may pass away, and all things become new.

6. Give away yourselves to God through Jesus Christ, making an hearty, a cheerful, and an entire dedication and surrender of your souls and bodies, and all that ye are and have, to him as your God and Father, resolving to serve and obey him all the days of your life: that as he made you for his glory, you may in some measure answer the end of your creation, which is to shew forth his praise. Serve not sin or Satan any longer. God made you upright and holy; but Satan unmade you, stripping you of your highest glory and ornament. Relinquish his service, which is the basest drudgery and slavery, and will land all that are employed in it in hell at last: and engage in the service of God in Christ, which is truly honourable and glorious, and

will be crowned with an everlasting reward in the other world: for where he is, there shall his servants also be.

7. Lastly, This doctrine affords a ground of love, peace, justice and mercy betwixt men, which should be carefully cultivated by all that would desire to be with God for ever. For says the prophet, Mal. 2:10. 'Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?' The consideration of being created by God, should be a powerful inducement to us to practise all the duties we owe to one another as men and Christians.

OF THE CREATION OF MAN

GEN. 1:27.—So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them.

HAVING discoursed of the creation of all things out of nothing, and exhibited some of the displays of the admirable wisdom, power, and goodness of God apparent therein, I come now to speak of the creation of man, the masterpiece of the lower creation. In the text we have an answer to that question, 'How did God create man?' God only spake the word and then the other creatures were produced: but being to create man, he called a council of the Trinity for that end: whereby the excellency of man above the other creatures, who is a compend of the world, is clearly demonstrated. Here we have the execution of that council, So God created man, &c. For, as says Seneca, a heathen moralist, man is not a work huddled over in a haste, and done without great forethought and consideration; for man is the greatest and most stupendous work of God, even of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. As the sacred historian had said before of the Creator, 'Let us make man in our image,' &c. so it is not for nought that he repeats the act of creating three times in this verse; in

which also the US in the former verse is restrained to God; so that the plurality there spoken of is not God and angels, but the three persons, one God; for it was not angels, but God that created man. Man here signifies man and woman, male and female, Adam and Eve. Wherefore they are called him and them; for as they were originally one, God having made two of one by creation; so they two were made one again by marriage. And they were both made in one day, Gen. 1:26–31.; and that in the image of God, which is twice repeated; the import whereof seems to be, that man was made very like God. Whereas there is but a shadow and vestige of him in the inferior creatures, as we may read the name and perfections of God in the least herb of the field; man was made so to represent God in his moral perfections as to imitate his virtues. Two things are here to be considered,

I. God's making man male and female.

II. His making man after his image.

I. Let us consider God's making man, male and female; that is, man and woman.

First, Adam was the male, and Eve the female. These were the common parents of all mankind, and there was no man in the world, before Adam. He is expressly called 'the first man,' 1 Cor. 15:5 and Eve 'the mother of all living,' Gen. 3:20. And hence it is said 'God hath made of one blood all nations of men,' Acts 17:26.

Secondly, Man consists of a soul and body, which being united constitute man; that is, man or woman. Here I shall consider, 1. The body; and, 2. The soul.

1. The body of the man. Man's body is a piece of most rare and curious workmanship, plainly indicating its divine Maker. In it there is a variety of members, none of them superfluous, but all adapted to the use assigned them by the wise Creator. The man's body, as Moses tells us, was formed of the dust of the ground, Gen. 2:7. Hence he

was called Adam, which signifies red earth; of which sort of virgin-earth man's body seems to have been made. The word rendered dust, signifies not dust simply, (says Zanchius), but clay, which is earth and water. This may teach us humility, and repress our pride, and particularly glorying in beauty or any external advantages of person, seeing we are sprung of no higher original than the earth upon which we tread; especially seeing, as we derived our first being from it, we must return to it again, there to abide till the resurrection-day.

2. The woman's body was formed of the man's, Gen. 2:21, 22 of a rib of the man's side, but not a bare rib, but flesh on it, ver. 23 which was taken out of his side while he was in a deep sleep, into which God cast him; so that he felt no pain. And it is not improbable, that in that deep sleep God revealed to him what he himself afterwards declares concerning Eve, and marriage in general, ver. 23, 24. Whether Adam had more ribs than other men, is not determined. If he had, it was not superfluous to him as the origin of mankind, though it might be as a private person; and therefore Eve being made of it, there was no more use for it. If he had not more ribs than other men, yet he sustained no loss thereby, which was otherwise made up, ver. 21 either by a new rib, or hardening the flesh to the use of a rib. In this the wisdom of God doth illustriously appear.

(1.) The woman's body was made of nobler matter than the man's, to be some ballast to the man's excellency in respect of his sex, that he might not despise but honour her. The word rendered made, Gen. 2:22 is in the Hebrew built. He made the man, but he built the woman, as a stately palace, or house, where all mankind draw their first breath.

(2.) It was made of the man's body, to teach men to love their wives as their own flesh.

(3.) It was not made out of man's head, to shew her that she is not to be her husband's mistress, nor usurp authority over him, 1 Tim. 2:12.; nor out of his feet, to shew him that she is not to be his slave,

to be trampled on by him; but out of his side, near his heart, to shew him that she must be treated as his companion, loved, nourished, and cherished by him.

(4.) Lastly, The mystery of the church drawing her life out of Christ's sleeping the sleep of death on the cross, Eph. 5 seems to have been here intended and shadowed forth.

The bodies of both our first parents were far more beautiful, handsome, and graceful than our bodies are now. We are begot of men, but they were the immediate workmanship of God. The author being more excellent, the workmanship must be so too. And so Adam signifies to be ruddy, and to shine, Lam. 4:7. So that to Eve in particular may justly be applied the following lines of a celebrated poet:

A woman loveliest of the lovely kind,

In body perfect, and complete in mind.

Secondly, The soul of man was of an original far different from that of his body. Moses gives us this account of it, Gen. 2:7. 'The Lord God—breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.' The Lord inspired him with a living reasonable soul, which presently appeared by his breathing at his nostrils; whereas before he was only a fair lifeless body. And this different account of man's soul and body clearly holds forth, that it was not fetched out of any power in the matter of his body, but was created of nothing. For this inspiration plainly implies that something was infused into it, which was not in it before, and did not originally inhere in it. Thus was the soul both of the man and the woman created; for that both were created with rational souls, is taught in our text, where they are said to be made after God's image; and Moses leaves us to gather the manner of the creation of the woman's soul from that of Adam's. Concerning the soul of man, three things are specially to be known.

1. That it is an incorporeal or spiritual substance, different from the body. It is called a spirit, Zech. 12:1. And Stephen prays, Acts 7:59. 'Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit. Compare Luke 24:39 where our Lord says concerning his body after his resurrection from the dead, 'Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.'

2. As the souls of Adam and Eve were immediately created of God, so the souls of all their posterity are immediately formed by God, and proceed not from their parents by generation or any other way: but God infuseth the soul created by him of nothing, into the body formed in the womb when it is fitly organised to receive it. And yet a man may properly be said to beget a man, though he only begets the body, as well as to kill a man, though he can only kill the body. This is plain from that express scripture-testimony, Zech. 12:1.—'that formeth the spirit of man within him.' So, Heb. 12:9. God is held forth as 'The Father of spirits,' in opposition to men as 'the fathers of our flesh;' which must needs be by immediate creation: for otherwise he is the Father of our flesh too, Eccl. 12:7. 'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.' He gave the body too, but the soul in such a manner as he gave not the body.

3. Hence the soul is immortal, being a spirit, and dies not with the body, Eccl. 12:7 just cited. Being immaterial, not consisting of parts, it cannot be dissolved. Men can kill the body, but not the soul; and therefore it doth not die with the body, being invulnerable, and unsusceptive of external injuries, Matth. 10:28 and 22:32. Neither does it sleep till the resurrection, as some have foolishly supposed. Our Lord told the thief on the cross, that that very day he (that is, his soul) should be with him in paradise, not to sleep, but to be actively employed in exercises peculiar to the heavenly state. And certain it is that the apostle Paul had no such thought, when he said, Phil. 1:23. 'I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.' If his soul was to sleep and doze in indolence and inactivity after his death, he had never preferred the

dissolution of his body, and the advantage of being with Christ, to his continuing in his mortal state, in which he was most usefully employed.

Thirdly, Why did God make man male and female?

1. That man might have a meet help, Gen. 2:18.; and this was the meetest help for the comfort of life, (however uncomfortable sin has now made it); otherwise God had given Adam a friend and not a wife. Hence the endearments of conjugal society, when discreetly and properly entered into and cultivated, are found, even in our present imperfect state, far preferable to those arising from the strictest and closest friendships among men.

2. For the lawful propagation of mankind, Gen. 1:27, 28 that there might be a godly seed, Mal. 2:15 and for a remedy against all inordinate lusts and libidinous desires.

II. Let us now consider God's making man after his own image.

Here I shall shew, 1. Who was created after God's image; and 2. Wherein this image consisted.

First, I am to shew who was created after the image of God. It was both the man and the woman, as is clear from the text. In this respect, indeed, there was one thing wherein the man excelled the woman, which is taken notice of by the apostle, 1 Cor. 11:7. 'He is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man.' Not but that the woman is the image of God in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, as well as the man: but the man is the image of God in respect of that authority which he has over his wife, who is the glory of man in respect of her subjection to him. So that what we say of the man as to his being created after the divine image, must be understood of the woman too.

Secondly, I will shew wherein the image of God, in which our first parents were made, consisted. Abstracting from the spirituality of

their souls, and the erect and graceful posture of their bodies, peculiar to rational animals alone, which are but a faint shadow of the image of God, (if they can with any propriety be called a shadow of it at all), this image doth principally at least shine in the soul, and those glorious qualities wherewith man was endued, that is, both the man and the woman.

1. The image of God, after which man was created, consisted in knowledge, Col. 1:10. He was created wise: Not that he knew all things, for that is proper to the omniscient Being alone; but he was ignorant of nothing that he was obliged to know; he had all the knowledge that was necessary for life and godliness. He had clear and distinct apprehensions of God, his nature and perfections, far superior to any knowledge of that kind that can now be acquired by the most diligent and the most laboured researches of human industry. And we can hardly suppose that he was ignorant of the great mystery of the Trinity, considered abstractly; as it was most certainly the second person who appeared to and conversed with him. This knowledge or wisdom of man appeared in his knowledge of the miraculous formation of Eve, whose nature and duty, as well as his own towards her, he declares; which he could not know but by a prophetic spirit. The primitive pair had God's law written on their hearts, Rom. 2:15 even that same law which was afterwards written on tables of stone, and promulgated from mount Sinai. It was concreated with them; so that no sooner were they man and woman, than they were knowing and intelligent creatures, endued with all the knowledge necessary for their upright state. Adam's giving names to the beasts, and those such as were expressive of their natures, Gen. 2:19 was a great evidence of his knowledge of nature. Thus his knowledge reached from the sun, that glorious fountain of light, to the meanest glow-worm that shines in the hedge. And that God gave them dominion over the earth and all the inferior creatures, is an evidence that they were endued with the knowledge of managing civil affairs, which a wise man will manage with discretion.

2. The image of God consisted in righteousness, Eph. 4:24. There was a perfect conformity in his will to the will of God. He was endued with a disposition to every good thing, Eccl. 7:29. 'God made man upright.' His will was straight with God's will, not bending to the right or left hand, without any irregular bias or inclination. And he had full power and ability to fulfil the whole law of God. As, in respect of knowledge, he perfectly knew the whole extent of his duty, so he was created with sufficient powers for the due performance thereof.

3. It consisted in holiness, Eph. 4:24. Man's affections were pure and holy, without being tinctured with any vitious appetite. They were regular and orderly, free from all disorder and distemper. They were set on lawful objects, and that in a right manner, loving what God loved, and hating what he hated; loving and delighting in God with all his heart, strength, soul, and mind. Yet all this happy disposition was mutable, he was not confirmed therein, nor set beyond the reach of falling therefrom, as the event has mournfully shewed.

This is that image of God wherein man was created, consisting in original righteousness, where his reason was naturally subject to God, his will to his reason, and his affections to his will, and consequently all duly subordinated to God, and directed to him, without any propensity or inclination to evil. A signal of this was, that both our first parents were naked, and yet were not ashamed, nor susceptible of shame.

That man was created in this condition, wise, altogether righteous, and holy, is not only clear from the above-cited scriptures, but is also agreeable to reason; which suggests, that nothing impure or imperfect, nothing having any vitious tendency or inclination, could proceed out of the hands of an holy God, who cannot be the author of evil. Man was created after the image of God; and in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, the scripture shews us, the image of God consists. Moreover, God made all very good, Gen. 1:31. Man's goodness consists in these excellent qualities; and without these he

would not have been fit for the end of his creation. How was it possible for him to have exercised the dominion he was invested with over the creatures, or served his Creator in the manner that became him without such endowments? Hence I infer,

(1.) That man was not created in pure naturals, that is, with bare faculties, neither good nor evil. For 'God made man upright,' Eccl. 7:29.

(2.) That there was not naturally in man a combat betwixt the flesh and the spirit, betwixt reason and appetite; no inclination to sin, no lustings of the flesh, or the inferior faculties of the soul. For this corrupt will or inclination is sin properly and truly, as the apostle shews, Rom. 7:7 and the fountain of all sin. And to say, that these dispositions were in man at his original formation, makes God indeed the author of sin; seeing he made (as they falsely pretend) man of such matter as is necessarily accompanied with this corrupt will and depraved inclination. For says the apostle, 'All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world,' 1 John 2:16.

(3.) That original righteousness was natural to man, and not supernatural in the primitive state. Natural it was, in so far as it was concreated with him, and was necessary to the perfection of man as he came out of the creating hands of God; and was not added to be as a bridle to his natural inclinations to evil, whereof he had none.

(4.) That Adam had the same spiritual strength in innocency wherewith now the regenerate do believe in Christ; having a power to do whatsoever God should command, and to believe whatever he should reveal.

4. The image of God consisted consequently at least in dominion over the inferior creatures, whereby he had a right to dispose of them according to his pleasure, Gen. 1:26, 27.; which was a resemblance of the supreme dominion of God over the creatures, though not

absolute and unlimited, but dependent on God. This was evidenced by the beasts being brought to Adam, in token of their subjection to him, and his imposing names on them expressive of their natures and properties.

The image of God seated in man's spiritual and immortal soul, endued with understanding, will, and affections, shone forth also in his body, which had a wonderful beauty in it, and such an admirable contexture of parts, adapted to their several uses and ends, as shewed it was intended for an immortal duration. There was no blemish, defect, nor disease, to be found in him. He was not liable to any attack by gout or gravel, or any tormenting pain. All the humours of his body were in a just temperament and disposition, calculated to prevent any distemper which might tend to the dissolution of that excellent constitution. His senses were all quick and lively, able to perform with vigour and delight their several operations. He was immortal in this state; and not subject to the attacks of death. Though his body was composed of jarring elements, which had a natural tendency to dissolution, yet the soul was endued with such virtue as to embalm the body, and preserve it from the least degree of corruption. The tree of life was the sacramental pledge of man's immortality. The erect figure of his body looking towards heaven, and the majesty that is in his countenance, shewed man to be the chief of the works of God in this lower world.

I shall shut up all with a few inferences.

1. Ah! how are we fallen from heaven! What a lamentable change has sin brought on man! It has defaced the moral image of God, with which man's soul was beautifully decorated in his primitive state, and rent in pieces that pleasant picture of himself which God set up in this lower world. This stately fabric lies now in ruins, and calls us to lament over its ruins with weeping eyes and grieved hearts. Now there is ignorance in the mind, instead of that knowledge of God and divine things, with which it was richly furnished in its primitive state. The understanding, that as a lamp or candle shone brightly, is now

enveloped with darkness. The will, that was exactly conformable to the will of God, and naturally disposed to comply with every intimation thereof, is now filled with irregularity, enmity, and rebellion against God and his law. The affections that were all regular, holy, and pure, are now disordered and distempered, placed upon and eagerly bent towards improper and sinful objects, loving and doating upon what men should hate, hating what they should love, joying in what they ought to mourn for, glorying in what is shameful, abhorring the chief good, and desiring what is ruinous to them. All the members of the body that were subordinated to the upright mind, and entirely at its command, are now in rebellion, and mislead and enslave the mind and superior faculties. And the creatures that were man's humble servants, ready to execute his commands, are now risen up against him, and the least of them having a commission, would prove more than a match for him. Nay, it is with difficulty and much pains that any of them are brought to engage in his service. Ah! how dismal is man's case! The crown is fallen from our head: wo unto us that we have sinned. Let us weep and mourn over our ruined state, and never rest till we get it repaired by faith in the Lord Jesus, the great Repairer of this spiritual breach.

2. How lovely are knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, wherein the image of God consists! They shine with a dazzling brightness, and should charm and captivate our minds. But, alas! by nature we are blind, and see not their beauty and excellency. O! let us endeavour, through grace, to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Try if this blessed change has passed upon you, if ye be now light in the Lord, be disposed to do his will, and are holy in heart and life. Study righteousness and holiness if ye would be like God. And beware of ignorance, unrighteousness, and impurity, which proceed from Satan, and make you so unlike a righteous and holy God.

3. Come to the Lord Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, and the beginning of the creation of God, who at first made man after the divine image, and can make him so over again, and will do so to those that come to him by faith, with this addition, that the image of God which he will impress on the soul anew, shall never be lost any more. O come to him now, that ye may become God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

MATTH. 10:29.—Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

OUR Lord is here encouraging his disciples against all the troubles and distresses they might meet with in their way, and particularly against the fear of men, by the consideration of the providence of God, which reaches unto the meanest of things, sparrows and the hairs of our head. Sparrows are of a mean price and small value; and yet, for as mean as they are, God preserves them, guides and disposes of all things concerning them, so that one of them cannot fall to the ground by shot or any other way, without his sovereign ordering and disposal.

The instruction deducible from the text is,

DOCT. 'There is a providence that extends itself to the least of things.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew that there is a providence.

II. Consider its object.

III. Explain the acts thereof.

IV. Consider its properties.

V. Lastly, make improvement.

I. I am to shew that there is a providence. This appears,

1. From plain scripture-testimonies; as Psal. 103:19. 'His kingdom ruleth over all.' Acts 17:28. 'In him we live, and move, and have our being,' Eph. 1:11.—'Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.' Providence is also held forth by a threefold scripture-emblem. Chiefly, (1.) Mount Moriah, which upon occasion of the miraculous preservation of Isaac, and a ram to be put in his room in order to be sacrificed, was called JEHOVAH JIREH, i. e. The Lord will provide, Gen. 22:14. (2.) Jacob's ladder, on which God appears managing all things, Gen. 28. (3.) Ezekiel's wheels, where there was a wheel in the middle of a wheel, denoting the agency of the first cause, and the superintending and directing providence of God, Ezek. 1.

2. From the nature of God, who being independent, and the first cause of all things, the creatures must needs depend upon him in their being and working. He is the end of all things, wise, knowing how to manage all for the best; powerful to effectuate whatever he has purposed; and faithful to accomplish all he has decreed, promised, or threatened.

3. From the harmony and order of the most confused things in the world. Every thing appears to a discerning eye to be wisely ordered, notwithstanding the confusions that seem to take place. What would become of the world, if there were not a providence seeing men that despise all order, and would fain give loose reins to their lusts and unbridled inclinations, are always the greatest party, and would overpower and destroy the smaller and most virtuous party? Herein the truth of providence clearly appears. The extraordinary judgments that have pursued and been inflicted upon wicked men, and the remarkable deliverances that have been granted to the church and people of God in all ages, do loudly proclaim a providence.

4. From the fulfilment of prophecies, which could not possibly be without a providence to bring them to pass.

II. Let us, in the next place, consider the object of providence, or that which it reacheth and extendeth to. And this is all the creatures, and all their actions, Heb. 1:3.—'Upholding all things by the word of his power,' Psal. 103:19. 'His kingdom ruleth over all.' The angels are subject to this providence, Neh. 9:6. 'Thou, even thou art Lord alone, thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.' So are also the devils, these infernal spirits, Matth. 8:31, 'If thou cast us out (said they to Jesus), suffer us to go away unto the herd of swine.' It reacheth natural things, as clouds, snow, winds, &c. as appears from Psal. 104; 147 and from daily observation. Casual things are ordered by providence, as lots, Prov. 16:33. 'The lot is cast into the lap: but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.' So in the case of accidental manslaughter, Exod. 21:13. 'If a man lie not in wait, and God deliver him into his hand.' There is nothing so mean but providence extends to it, such as the falling of a sparrow, and the numbering of the hairs of our head. It is God that feeds the fowls and the young ravens that cry. He clothes the lilies and grass of the field, that have no hand of man about them. He made lice, frogs, &c. a plague to scourge Pharaoh and his people, worms to eat up Herod, &c. In a special manner providence is conversant about man, forming him in the womb, 'Hast thou not poured me out as milk (says Job), and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with flesh and hast fenced me with bones and sinews,' Job 10:10, 11.—bringing him forth out of his mother's bowels, and holding him up thereafter, Psal. 71:6. His heart is in the Lord's hand, and all his thoughts and inclinations are under his controul, Prov. 21:1. He directs and orders all his steps. The most free acts of the creature's will are governed by superintending providence. All their good actions, John 15:5. 'Without me ye can do nothing.' So also their evil actions, Acts 4:27, 28. 'For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod

and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done,' Gen. 45:7. 'God sent me before you,' says Joseph to his brethren, though they had wickedly sold him into Egypt.

III. I proceed to consider the acts of providence. They are two, preserving and governing the creatures and their actions.

1. God by his providence preserves all the creatures. This preservation of the creatures is an act of providence, whereby they are preserved in their being and power of acting, Heb. 1:3. 'Upholding all things by the word of his power.' In this God sometimes makes use of means, and sometimes acts without means. We have both described, Hos. 2:21, 22. 'I will hear saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel.' He preserves the heavens immediately, the earth, the corn, the wine, and the oil, &c. mediately. And thus by his providence he provides all things necessary for the preservation of all things; Psal. 145:15, 16. 'The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine haud, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.' This act of providence is so necessary, that nothing could subsist one moment without it. For there is no necessary connexion betwixt the being of the creatures this moment and their being the next; and as they could not give themselves a being, so they cannot continue it, but must be upheld by God as a ball in the air, Heb. 1:3. There is a continual efflux of providence necessary for preserving and upholding the creatures in their being, otherwise they would be independent, and could preserve themselves, which is grossly absurd.

2. God does not only preserve the creatures, but governs and manages them, which is the second act of providence; whereby he disposes of all things, persons, and actions, according to his will, Prov. 21:1. 'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of

water: he turneth it whithersoever he will, Prov. 16:33. 'The lot is cast into the lap: but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.' Chap. 16:9. 'A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps.' And this act of providence is also necessary: for as the creature cannot be or exist without God, so neither can it act without him, Acts 17:21. 'For in him we live, and move, and have our being.' God does not make man as the carpenter doth the ship, which afterwards sails without him; but he rules and guides him, sitting at the helm, to direct and order all his motions: so that whatever men do, they do nothing without him: not only in their good actions, where he gives grace, and excites it, working in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure: but also in their evil actions, wherein they are under the hand of Providence, but in a very different manner.

For understanding this point, how the providence of God reacheth to and is concerned in sinful actions, we are to consider, that God neither puts evil into the hearts of men, nor stirs them up to it: for, says the apostle, Jam. 1:13. 'God cannot be tempted with evil; neither tempteth he any man.' And therefore he is not the author of sin. But,

1. God permits sin, when he does not hinder it, which he is not obliged to do. Not that it falls out so as he cannot hinder it, for he is omnipotent, and can do all things; nor yet as if he cared not what fell out in the world; but he does wisely, for his holy ends, efficaciously will not to hinder it: Hence we read, Acts 14:16 that 'God in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.' He does not permit sin, for that he will not violate or force the creature's free will; for God's providence offers no violence to the will of the creature; and if so, he should never hinder sin at all, for the same reason. But certainly he has holy ends in the permission of sin: for thereby his justice, mercy, wisdom, and love, in sending his Son to save sinners, do conspicuously appear, which otherwise would have been under an eternal cloud, hid from the view of men and angels.

For the further illustration of this doctrine relating to the concern of providence in sinful actions, we are to consider them in a twofold

respect, as simple actions, or natural actions of the creature, abstract from any obliquity or deformity cleaving to them; and as actions having irregularity and pravity in them. Considered as natural actions of the creature, they are all effected by the providence of God, which co-operates with, and enables the creature to produce them, in such a manner that without the efflux of providence the creature could not move a hand or foot, or perform any action whatever; 'for in him we move:' and no action of the creature simply considered, or as a natural action, can be sinful, but has a goodness of being in it, and is effected by the influence of providence. As to the pravity or sin that is in actions, as God decreed the futurity of sin, or permitted it to take place, and did not hinder it; so all the sin or vitiosity that is in actions proceeds entirely from the creature, and the evil lusts and passions that are in his heart.

Thus a man's taking up a stone, and throwing it, is a natural action, which the providence of God enables him to perform; but his throwing it at another man with an intention to kill him, is permitted by God, otherwise it could not take place; for if a hair cannot fall from our head without the providence of God, much less can a man be murdered without it: and the killing of the man by the throwing of the stone, proceeds entirely from the malice and wickedness that was in the heart of the murderer, the operation of which God did not hinder, which he is nowise obliged to do.

2. God leaves the sinner so far as he sees meet to the swing of his own lusts, and denies him restraining grace. Thus it is said of Hezekiah, a godly king, that, "in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart," 2 Chron. 32:31. And when the restraint is taken off the sinner, he runs furiously, to evil.

3. God bounds sin, and restrains men in their sins, as he does the raging sea, allowing it to go so far, but no further. He has such a power and command over wicked men, that they are not masters of

their own affections and dispositions, but many times act quite contrary to what they had firmly resolved and proposed: as in the case of Laban. He pursued Jacob, when he left Padan-aram, in order to return into his own country, with a wicked intention to do him hurt, by robbing him of his wives, children, and cattle; but the Lord restrained him, and influenced him to enter into a covenant of friendship with the good patriarch, Gen. 32. Thus Esau had resolved on Jacob's death, and went out to meet him with a purpose to destroy him; but when providence brought them together, it is said, "Esau embraced Jacob, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Thus Balaam came with an express intention to curse Israel, and yet he fell a blessing them. Thus he bent the hearts of the Egyptians to favour the Israelites, so that they sent them away with great riches, by lending them jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and costly garments. Thus, by a secret instinct, he turned Jehoshaphat's enemies away from him, when they came with a purpose to destroy him, 2 Chron. 18:31.; and at another time he turned his enemies against themselves, so that they sheathed their swords in one another's bowels, 2 Chron. 20. Thus also he restrained the soldiers that broke the legs of the two thieves that were crucified with Christ, from touching his, in order to accomplish his word, that a bone of the paschal lamb, which was a type of Christ, the Lamb of God, should not be broken. So true is that saying of the Psalmist, Psal. 76:10. 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.' God has a bridle in the mouths of wicked men, when they are under the most impetuous fury of their lusts, to turn them as he will, restraining and curbing in respect of some, and giving swing to others.

4. Lastly, God over-rules all to a good end. God has one end in wicked actions, and the sinner another. The sinner minds and intends evil, but God means and designs good by them all. So Joseph's brethren, in their cruelly selling him for a slave, meant evil to the poor youth; but God, in that dispensation meant it for good, and brought much good out of it to Joseph, and his father and brethren. Thus the Jews crucified Christ out of malice against him;

but God by that crucifixion intended satisfaction to his justice for the sins of men, and the redemption and salvation of an elect world. Thus God brings good, the greatest good out of the worst of evils. What greater evil or more atrocious wickedness can be imagined, than the violent death of the innocent Son of God, who went about doing good, and was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners? and yet what a rich and astonishing good resulted therefrom, even glory to God, and peace and good-will towards men!

IV. Our next business is to consider the properties of divine providence.

1. God's providence is most holy, Psal. 145:17. 'The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.' Even though providence reach to and be conversant in sinful actions, yet it is pure; as the sun contracts no defilement, though it shine on a dunghill. For God is neither the physical nor moral cause of the evil of any action, more than he who rides on a lame horse is the cause of his halting. All the evil that is in sinful actions proceeds and flows from the wicked agent, as the stench of the dunghill does not proceed from the heat of the sun, but from the corrupt matter contained in the dunghill.

2. It is most wise, Isa. 28:29. 'This cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.' Infinite wisdom always proposes the most excellent ends in all its operations, and uses the best methods for accomplishing its ends. However perplexed confused, and void of wisdom providential administrations may appear to us poor mortals of narrow, shallow capacities, yet they are the result of the highest wisdom and the deepest counsel, as proceeding from and directed by him whose name is the only wise God, and cannot but manage all things with the greatest understanding. And the day will at last come when it shall be said by the united voice of the whole assembly and church of the first-born, that God hath done all things well: and then the plan of providence will appear in every respect to have been most wise, harmonious and consistent.

3. Providence is most powerful. Hence the Lord says to Sennacherib, the king of Assyria 'I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest,' 2 Kings 19:28. 'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.' Who can resist his will which is almighty? He can never fail of his end, but all things fall out according to his decree, which is efficacious and irresistible.

I shall conclude with an use of exhortation.

1. Beware of drawing an excuse for your sin from the providence of God; for it is most holy, and has not the least efficiency in any sin you commit. Every sin is an act of rebellion against God; a breach of his holy law, and deserves his wrath and curse; and therefore cannot be authorised by an infinitely-holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity without detestation and abhorrence. Though he has by a permissive decree allowed moral evil to be in the world, yet that has no influence on the sinner to commit it. For it is not the fulfilling of God's decree, which is an absolute secret to every mortal, but the gratification of their own lusts and perverse inclinations, that men intend and mind in the commission of sin.

2. Beware of murmuring and fretting under any dispensations of providence that ye meet with; remembering that nothing falls out without a wise and holy providence, which knows best what is fit and proper for you. And in all cases, even amidst the most afflicting incidents that befall you, learn submission to the will of God; as Job did, when he said, in consequence of a train of the heaviest calamities that happened to him, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord,' Job 1:21. In the most distressing case say with the disciples, 'The will of the Lord be done,' Acts 21:14.

3. Beware of anxious cares and diffidence about your through-bearing in the world. This our Lord has cautioned his followers against, Matth. 6:31. 'Take no thought (that is, anxious and

perplexing thought), saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?' Never let the fear of man stop you from duty, Matth. 10:28, 29.; but let your souls learn to trust in God, who guides and superintends all the events and administrations of providence, by whatever hands they are performed.

4. Do not slight means, seeing God worketh by them; and he that hath appointed the end orders the means necessary for gaining the end. Do not rely upon means, for they can do nothing without God, Matth. 4:4. Do not despond if there be no means, for God can work without them, as well as with them; Hos. 1:7. 'I will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.' If the means be unlikely, he can work above them, Rom. 4:19. 'He considered not his own body now dead, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.' If the means be contrary, he can work by contrary means, as he saved Jonah by the whale that devoured him. That fish swallowed up the prophet, but by the direction of providence, it vomited him out upon dry land.

5. Lastly, Happy is the people whose God the Lord is: for all things shall work together for their good. They may sit secure in exercising faith upon God, come what will. They have ground for prayer; for God is a prayer-hearing God, and will be inquired of by his people as to all their concerns in the world. And they have ground for the greatest encouragement and comfort amidst all the events of providence, seeing they are managed by their covenant God and gracious friend, who will never neglect or overlook his dear people, and whatever concerns them. For he hath said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' Heb. 13:5.

THE WISE OBSERVATION OF PROVIDENCES ILLUSTRATED AND

ENFORCED

PSAL. 107:43.—Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.

WHOSOEVER would walk with God, must be due observers of the word and providence of God, for by these in a special manner he manifests himself to his people. In the one we see what he says; in the other what he does. These are the two books that every student of holiness ought to be much conversant in. They are both written with one hand, and they should both be carefully read, by those that would have not only the name of religion, but the thing. They should be studied together, if we would profit by either; for being taken together, they give light the one to the other; and as it is our duty to read the word, so it is also our duty to observe the work of God, Psal. 28:5. The one I formerly recommended; and I am now to press the other, as a proper addition to our late discourse on the providence of God, from the text now read. Wherein we have two things.

1. The observing of providences recommended, Whoso is wise, &c. In the Hebrew it runs, Who is wise, and will observe these things. Wherein we may observe,

1st, The duty itself recommended, observing these things. Where we are to consider the act and the object.

(1.) The object these things; that is, the dispensations of providence. These are the things the Psalmist would have men to observe. For the design of this psalm is to praise God for his wonderful works of providence in the world, especially in the church. For this cause he sets before us, (1.) Wonderful deliverances wrought by providence, instanced in the seasonable relief given to, (1.) Needy and bewildered strangers, far from their own, ver. 3–9. (2.) Captives and prisoners, ver. 10–16. (3.) Sick people at the gates of death, ver. 17–22. (4.) To seafaring men in a storm, ver. 23–32. (2.) Strange and surprising changes in human affairs. (1.) Fruitful places made barren, and

barren places fruitful. ver. 33–35. For an instance of which we need but consider this our own country, sometime a forest, for little use but to be a hunting-field, now comfortably maintaining many families, and useful to the nation by its great store. (2.) Mean families raised by a blessing on their husbandry and store, and cast down again from their prosperity by cross providences, ver. 36–39. (3.) Those that were high in the world abased, and those that were mean and despicable raised to honour, ver. 40, 41. These turns of providence are of use to solace saints, and silence sinners, ver. 42. Now, here is a field opened for serious observation. These and such like things we are called to notice.

(2.) The act, observation. We must not let providences pass without remark, but observe them carefully, as men that are neither fools nor atheists, but have eyes in their heads, and do not think the world is guided by blind chance, but by an infinitely wise God. The word signifies to take heed, and retain, as a watchman in a city does. We must take heed to them as they fall out, and carefully keep them in mind, that they be not forgot, or slip out of our minds.

2dly, The qualification necessary to fit a man for this duty, wisdom. This is true spiritual wisdom; for in scripture language all strangers to serious godliness are accounted fools, however sharp-sighted otherwise they be. As for others, they neither will nor can rightly observe these things.

3dly, The manner of the expression. It intimates, (1.) That there are few so wise as to observe providences. Most part of the world are stupid on that point; they let them go and come without notice, Jer. 9:12. (2.) That those who are truly wise will do it, Hos. 14 ult.

2. The advantage accruing from a wise observation of providences. They shall understand thereby the loving-kindness, goodness, and mercy of God, written out in his dispensations towards themselves and others; as we know how one stands affected to us by his behaviour towards us. His works will give us a clearer discovery of

his glorious perfections; and these observations will enrich us with experiences. It is remarkable that some of these things are cross providences; yet a right observation of them will shew us God's kindness; for the divine goodness may be seen in cross providences as well as in favourable ones.

From the text I shall only observe one doctrine at present.

DOCT. "It is the duty of Christians wisely to observe providences."

This is a weighty point in practical religion, that requires observation in speaking to it, and practising it.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What it is to observe providences wisely.

II. What are the objects about which we are to make our observations.

III. What we are to observe in them.

IV. The reasons why Christians should wisely observe providences.

V. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to shew what it is to observe providences wisely. It presupposes some things, and imports some things.

First, It presupposes these four things.

1. That there is a providence. The world is not managed by fortune, nor do things fall out by blind chance. That there is a God, and that there is a providence, have been always looked on by men of sound judgment as certain maxims, establishing one another. And indeed to set up the creatures to act otherwise than under the providence of God, is to set them up for independent beings, that is, for gods. The scripture is plain that it reacheth all things, Rom. 11:36. 'For of him,

and through him, and to him are all things;' even from the greatest to the least, as ye will see from Mat. 10:29, 30, 31. 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing; and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.' And unless it were so, how could he foresee and foretell things, Isa. 46:10.

Some think this would disturb his repose, and is unworthy of him, and his purity and wisdom. But do not these atheists see the sun in the heavens undisturbed, with his (yet) universal influence, shine on the dunghill as well as the garden, without contracting any spot? And is it unworthy of God to govern what he has created? As for the wisdom in the management of the world, they are fools who judge it folly before they see the end.

2. The faith of this providence. We must believe the doctrine of providence, if we would be wise observers thereof. The faith of the saints in this point may be shaken in an hour of temptation; as was the case with Asaph, Psal. 73:13, 14, 15. 'Verily (says he) I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children.' And the unbelief of others therein makes them half atheists, Mal. 3:14, 15. 'Ye have said, it is vain to serve God: and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.' And the slender belief there is of it in the world makes men overlook providence, Hab. 1:16. 'Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag: because by them their portion is fat and their meat plenteous.' Labour ye firmly to believe providence, that ye may observe it; nay, believe it, and ye will observe it.

3. Providence has a language to the children of men. It is a clear part of the name of God whereby he manifests himself to the world, and has served to convince men of his eternal power and Godhead, whom no other arguments could reach: Dan. 4 ult. 'Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise, and extol, and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.' Psal. 19:3, 4. 'There is no speech, nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.' Rods have a language, Micah 6:9. 'The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.' And so also have mercies a language, Rom. 2:4. 'Not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.' And providences being the work of a rational agent, they must have a design.

4. A disposition to understand the language and design of providence. It is for this end they are observed wisely, Micah 6:9 forecited. God speaks by providence, and the wise hearken by observation, that they may know what is meant by those characters, in which God writes his mind towards them. Hence the more one pursues communion with God, he will the more narrowly observe providence; and when he grows remiss and negligent as to communion with God, he lets these things easily pass. But these are the prints of the Lord's feet, which one walking with God will set himself to observe.

Secondly, To observe providences wisely, imports these five things.

1. A watching for them till they come. Hence says the prophet, Hab. 2:1. 'I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd.' This is to wait on the Lord in the way of his judgments, Isa. 26:8. A practice necessarily following on the serious practice of godliness, in laying matters before the Lord by prayer, and depending on him according to his word, Psal. 130:1, 5, 6. 'Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. I wait for the Lord, and my

soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning: I say more, than they that watch for the morning.' Some providences have a glaring light with them, that cannot but strike the eye of the beholder; but others not being so may pass unobserved, if people be not on their watch. Providence sometimes works long under ground, and wraps itself up in a long night of darkness; but the wise observer will wait the dawning of the day, and the setting up its head above ground, Psal. 69:3. 'Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God,' Lam. 3:49, 50. 'Mine eye trickleth down and ceaseth not, without any intermission: till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven.' For they that believe will not make haste.

2. A taking heed to them, and marking them when they come, Isa. 25:9. 'Lo this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.' Heeding them, I mean, as from the hand of the Lord; for though men heed the thing, if they do not heed the hand it comes from, they have but the carcase without the soul of providences. The threads of providence are sometimes so small and fine, and our senses so little exercised to discern, that they may come and go without our notice, Luke 19:44. 'Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.' Therefore the eyes of the wise man are in his head, to observe what comes from heaven; looking aforehand, and in the time; for he that looks sees, Ezek. 1:15, Zech. 6:1.

3. A serious review of them, pondering and narrowly considering them. We should not only look to them, but into them, Psal. 111:2. 'The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.' And the more we see of them, the more of God we will see in them; for the further we wade in these waters, the deeper. Providence is a wheel within a wheel, a piece of the nice workmanship of heaven, which may make us cry out with wonder many a time, O wheel! Ezek. 10:13. The design of providence oftentimes lies hid, not to be seen at first view; but we must look again and again, and narrowly inspect it, ere we can comprehend it. It is a

mystery many times, looking at which our weak eyes will begin to dazzle. And that we may unravel the clue by a sanctified judgment, Psal. 77:6 it will be needful to call in the help of prayer, with much humility, faith, and self-denial, Job 10:2 and of the scripture, Psal. 73:16.

4. Laying them up, and keeping them in record, Luke 1:66. We should keep them as one would do a treasure, for the time to come. Then are they experiences, which will be notable provision for after-times. O, if these observations were wisely made, and carefully laid up, the former part of our life might furnish noble helps for the latter part of it; and the longer we lived, the richer would we be in this spiritual treasure: even as in war one victory helps to get another. And the old disciple might have a body of practical experimental divinity in his head, drawn forth from his own observation. We find David, when young, improving providences formerly thus observed, 1 Sam. 17:37. 'The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine;' and when old doing the same, Psal. 37:25. 'I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.'

5. Lastly, It is a practical observation of them. They who observe providences wisely do not observe them only to clear their judgments, and inform their understandings, as by matters of speculation; but to influence their hearts and affections in the conduct of their life, Micah 6:9. The more that one wisely observes providence, he will be the more holy. The observing the work of providence about himself and others, will advance the work of grace in the heart, and holiness in the life, Rom. 5:4. 'Patience worketh experience; and experience hope,' Psal. 64:7, 9. 'God shall shoot at them with an arrow, suddenly shall they be wounded. And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider his doing.' It is a woful observation of providence, when it has no good effect on people to make them better. Hence Moses says to the Israelites, Deut. 29:2, 3, 4. 'Ye have seen all that the Lord did

before your eyes in the land of Egypt, unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs and those great miracles: yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.' But it is yet worse when people are made worse thereby, as in the case of him who said, 'Behold this evil is of the Lord, what! should I wait for the Lord any longer?' 2 Kings 6:33. But it is a kindly effect of it when men accommodate their spirits to the divine dispensations they are under, according to that, Eccl. 7:14. 'In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider.'

II. I come now to speak of the objects about which we are wisely to make our observations, these things. This is a spacious field, as broad as the universe, or the whole creation, so far as we come to the knowledge any manner of way of the works of God. For providence reacheth to all things, and in every thing the finger of God is to be seen. None of all God's works of providence laid open to our view are excepted, nor allowed to be overlooked, Psal. 28:5. And all of them may be profitably noticed. But more particularly, I shall offer you a sample of the admirable web of providence; a sample, I say, for how small a part of his ways do we know? The dispensations of providence may be considered,

1. With respect to their objects.
2. With respect to their kinds.
3. With respect to the time of their falling out.

FIRST, Providences may be considered with respect to their objects, which are all the creatures and all their actions. And here let us,

FIRST, Look into the invisible world, and trace providence a little there. It becomes Christians to cause their eye to follow there where God's hand is before them at work. David tells us, Psal. 139:8. 'If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.' God is there with his hand of providence, ver.

10. 'Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.' And the apostle gives the Christian that character, 2 Cor. 4:18 that 'he looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.'

First, Look to the lower part of that world, the kingdom of darkness, and there you see devils and damned spirits of men, with the providence of God about them in an awful manner. A fearful web of providence encompasses them.

1. Concerning devils, view the awful providences they are under, and observe,

(1.) How these once glorious creatures are now irrecoverably lost, and reserved to a certain and dreadful judgment, 2 Pet. 2:4. Jude 6. Behold and learn the severity of God's justice from this his work; how no natural excellency will preserve the creature from wrath when once defiled with sin. They were the first that ventured to break over the hedge of the holy law, and God set them up for dreadful examples to the whole creation. Behold the power of God, whose hands devils themselves cannot rid themselves out of. And understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, in providing a Saviour for man, and not for them, Heb. 2:16.

(2.) How, notwithstanding, these malicious creatures are not so pent up in their prison, but they are permitted to go about through the world; yet this world is generally inhabited without molestation from them. Only now and then, in some very rare cases, they are suffered to molest men, by a particular providential permission as in the case of Job, chap. 2. This general case of the world is a continued wonder of providence. How is it that ever we get any rest from them in house or field? It is not for want of will or natural power, but from the restraint of providence upon them, continued upon them, notwithstanding the world's wickedness. Observe this thankfully, and understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

2. Concerning damned spirits, who are in hell under the wrath of God, see the awful providences about them, and observe how miserable they are, Luke 16:23 being 'punished from the presence of the Lord,' 2 Thess. 1:9 all hopes of recovery being now lost for ever. And learn how precious time is, that what we have to do, ye may do quickly: how deceitful sin and the world are; and how severely God punishes at length, though he may long bear with sinners. And understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, that ye are yet in the land of the living, under means of grace, and hopes of glory.

Secondly, Look to the upper part of the invisible world, the regions of bliss; and there you will see angels and the spirits of just men made perfect wrapt up in a glorious web of providence, sparkling with goodness and mercy. See the Larger Catechism on Providence.

Concerning the blessed angels, observe,

1. How they are established in holiness and happiness, 1 Tim. 5:21. They were of the same changeable nature with those that fell; but God held them up, and has confirmed them, that they cannot fall now. And learn the power of sovereign grace, which can establish one tottering creature when another falls; and how happy they are who cheerfully do the will of God, for so the angels do in heaven. Though proud shining hypocrites fall away and perish, yet trembling saints shall be made to stand.

2. How they are employed in the administration of his power, mercy, and justice, 2 Kings 19:35. In one night the angel of the Lord smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand, Heb. 1:14. 'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?' God sends them to take care of his children, who no doubt receive many benefits off their hands, which they are not sensible of. Understand the loving-kindness of the Lord in sending them, and their love to God and man in taking such employment. The living creatures have the wheels going by them.

Concerning the souls of the blessed, observe how blessed and happy they are in the enjoyment of God, where no clouds interpose betwixt them and the light of his countenance, Heb. 12:23. Luke 16:22. And learn here what a vain thing this world is, and how we may be happy without it, yea cannot be completely happy till we be beyond it. What a rich harvest the seed of grace in the soul brings in, and how holiness leads the way to complete happiness. Wonderful is the loving-kindness of the Lord, that takes those who serve him here, to be his attendants in his palace and brings them to the full enjoyment of himself in glory.

Let this suffice for a sample of providence in the invisible world.

SECONDLY, Look to the visible world, and trace providence there. See how the hand of the Lord is constantly at work about these his creatures which he has made, John 5:17. 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.'

1. Consider the inanimate or lifeless creatures, which are the objects of providence as well as other things. They are not capable of self-governing, but he that made them guides them to their ends.

The heavenly bodies, sun, moon, and stars, are under the government of wise providence. They got their orders at first, Gen. 1:16. 'God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.' And they have still observed these orders since. Psal. 104:19. 'He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.' Sometimes indeed by a particular commission, they have altered their ordinary course as in Joshua's time, chap. 10:12, 13, when the sun stood still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon; for a whole day; but they returned to their course again. The sun keeps his course allotted him by the divine decree; for should he go at random, our earth would either be burnt or quite frozen up, that we could not live on it. O the loving-kindness of the Lord, that makes the very heavenly bodies punctually to keep pace with our necessities, and has

not avenged himself on men's disorders, by suffering these to go into disorder and confusion!

The raging sea is under the management of providence. God manages it as easily as the nurse does the infant, whom she swaddles and lays in its cradle, from whence it cannot get out, while she will have it to stay there; Job 38:11. 'Hitherto shalt thou come (says Providence to this unruly element), but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.' O look to his work and learn his loving-kindness, Psal. 104:24, 25, 26. 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships; there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.' Behold his greatness, and adore him, Matth. 8:27. 'What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?' Fear before such a mighty One, Isa. 28:2. And let it quiet your hearts under all the tossings ye meet with in the world; for it will cost him but to say, 'Peace and be still;' Psal. 93:4. 'The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.'

The air and wind, which no man can lay hold of, are entirely under the conduct of Providence, John 3:8. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth,' in respect of man; but in respect of God, where he listeth, Matth. 8:27 forecited. What a wonder is it, (not to speak of tempests, hail, rain, snow, &c. Psal. 147:15–18), that such a thin invisible body should bear up all the fowls of the air, the heavy clouds also, and carry them from place to place, so that we may say, as Psal. 18:10. 'He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind! How then can our God be at a loss for means to support us? He has filled the world with it; it is about us, in us, in our nostrils, in our bowels, nay, in every pore of our bodies; yea, without it we could not breathe, yet we see it not. Shall we then think it strange, that the God who made it is every where present? Nay, he is without and within us, though we see him not. If he mix pestilential vapours with it, we are dead men, as if poison were mixed with our

drink: for at every breathing we draw it in; so entirely do we depend on the Lord. O then understand the loving-kindness of the Lord in this respect.

The earth is under the care and government of the same wise Providence. He made it, and that was a great work; he preserves it and governs it, and that is another. He supports it, Heb. 1:3. The earth bears us, but what bears the earth? You cannot think it is infinite or boundless, and therefore it must have another side opposite to that we are on. Yes, and by the powerful providence of God it hangs like a ball in the air, Job 26:7. 'He hangeth the earth upon nothing.' O then, is there any thing too hard for our God to do? He fills it with his riches, the surface of it, and the bowels of it, Psal. 104:24. But what is most necessary for men's use is on the surface of it, easiest to be come at, Job 28. He feeds it, that it may feed us, Deut. 11:11. Hos. 2:21, 22. When the strength thereof is weakened with new influences from the heavens, he renews it, Psal. 104:30. And since the flood, the promise then given, Gen. 8:22 that 'while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease,' has been punctually performed. O understand the loving-kindness of the Lord in these things, what a gracious and bountiful God he is! And learn how surely all his promises to his people shall be accomplished.

2. Consider the vegetative part of the world, things that have life, but not sense, such as trees, plants, &c. how Providence cares for and manages them. Our Lord calls us to observe these things, and thereby understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, Matth. 6:28. 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin.' Lilies of the field have not the care of man about them, as those of the garden, but Providence cares for them. This teaches us to lay by anxiety, and trust God, ver. 30. See how the earth is kindly furnished with vegetables by providence, not only for men's necessity, but their conveniency and delight, Psal. 104:14–17. And shall not this good God be loved and cheerfully served by us? Every pile of grass is a preacher of the loving-kindness of the Lord.

3. Consider the sensitive part of the world, such as have life and sense, but not reason; as birds, beasts, and fishes. And observe what a vast family are maintained on the Creator's cost. And though we cannot trust providence, yet what an innumerable company there is of dependents on mere providence! Psal. 104:27. 'These all wait upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.' Observe this provision, and thence learn to believe even where ye cannot see, Matth. 6:26, 'Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?' For Providence does for them that have none to do for them; Psal. 147:9. 'He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens that cry.' Observe how providence has subjected them to man as servants that could easily be his masters in respect of strength, as the horse, ox, &c. yet the face of man strikes a damp upon them, which is the more remarkable, that man by sin did forfeit his dominion over the creatures. But this must be resolved into the virtue of that word, executed daily by providence, Gen. 9:2. 'The fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea.' O what a power is in a word of divine appointment?

4. Consider the rational part of the world, men having life, sense, and reason. In these providence shews itself most brightly. Man is the compend of the creation, having a spirit as angels are spirits, and a body with the rest. And he is the peculiar care of Heaven. This is the main object of our observation.

1st, We should observe the dispensations of providence towards societies; and the nearer our relation to them be, we should observe them the more narrowly.

(1.) Towards societies of men in the world, kingdoms, churches, congregations, families, &c.

[1.] Much of the power, wisdom, goodness, justice, &c. of God, might be learned from the revolutions and changes in states and kingdoms, which should make us inquisitive for the knowledge of public affairs. And O what a glorious scene of providence has been opened of late in Britain, shining with illustrious mercy to the church and nation, in delivering us when at the brink of ruin; depth of wisdom, in baffling in a moment the cunning projects of enemies; almighty power, in so easily crushing their towering hopes; radiant justice, in making the stone tumble down on the heads of those that rolled it, and making enquiry for the blood of the saints shed many years ago.*

[2.] Providences toward the church of God are mainly to be observed, 1 Sam. 4:13. The angels themselves notice these, to learn something from them, Eph. 3:10. What concerns the church is the greatest work on the wheel of providence; and in most, if not all the great works of God through the world, he has in them an eye to his church. As she is for God, so other things are for her.

Particularly we should observe the way of providence towards the church of Scotland, whereof we are members; which has been as admirable a mixture of mercy and judgment, as perhaps any church since the apostles days has met with. How high has she been raised in peace and purity, and how low laid at other times! How often has she been at the brink of ruin, and wonderfully preserved? How have her faithful friends been signally owned of God, and her enemies often borne the evident marks of God's displeasure! &c. And yet, more particularly,

We should observe the way and aspect of providence towards the congregation, how the Lord has been and is dealing with us, that we may accommodate ourselves to his dispensations, and answer the call of them.

[3.] Towards families. Sometimes the Lord causes a warm sunshine of prosperity on families, and sometimes the heavens are louring above them; they have their risings and fallings, as all other societies

in this changeable world, as is beautifully described by the Psalmist, Psal. 107:38, 39, 41. 'He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly, and suffereth not their cattle to decrease. Again they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock.' How does Job mournfully observe the way of providence with his family, chap. 29:2–5 and David on his death-bed the humbling circumstances of his! 2 Sam. 23:5.

There are few of our families but God has of late one way or other visited them; his voice has cried to our houses, as well as to the land. It is our duty to observe the same, read the language of it, and comply with the design thereof.

2dly Towards particular persons; for we may learn something, from God's way with every one. And,

(1.) Towards others, whether godly or wicked. This was the Psalmist's practice to have his eyes in his head, and to look about him in the world, and learn something for his own establishment, both from the harms and happiness of others, Psal. 37:35–37. 'I have seen the wicked in great power; and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and 'behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.' It is observable, that the holy scripture is not written as a system of precepts, with the reasons of them; but the body of it is a cluster of examples, wherein we may see, as in a glass, what we are to follow if we would be happy, and what we are to shun, Rom. 15:4. 'For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.' A plain evidence, that whoso would please God, must observe those things that are set before his eyes in providence.

(2.) Towards ourselves in particular. These providences come nearest us, and therefore should be most narrowly observed. In these we are the parties to whom God directs his speech immediately; but, alas!

often it is not observed, Job 33:14. 'For God speaketh once, yea twice, but man perceiveth it not.' There is none of us that are not the objects of wonderful providences, but especially true Christians, who may well say, as Psal. 40:5. 'Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.' We might each of us fill a volume with accounts of the wonderful works of God, and yet confine ourselves to what has happened to ourselves, if we had but the wisdom to observe the same. Every moment we would be a wonder to ourselves, if we could but discern the beautiful mixture of that web of providence wherein every moment we are wrapt up.

(1.) Let us observe how we are powerfully preserved by Providence, Heb. 1:3. Psal. 36:6. 'Lord, thou preservest man and beast.' When we consider how unlike our souls are to our bodies, we may more wonder at the continuance than the breach of that union. When we think how death has as many gates to come in by, as our body has pores, how the seeds of a thousand diseases are in our bodies, what a train of perishing principles they are made up of, how easily, while we walk amidst the creatures of God here, fire may be set to the train, and the house of clay quickly blown up, we may say there is something more astonishing in our life than in our death. And it must be a powerful providence that preserves this life of ours, as a spark of fire in the midst of an ocean of water, or as a bag of powder amidst sparks of fire flying on every hand.

Besides, how few of us are there, but sometimes there has been but as a hair-breadth betwixt death and us, by reason either of diseases or unforeseen accidents, which we could not therefore ward off. So that we might say of our preservation, This is the finger of God.

What remarkable deliverances has the Lord wrought for some by unordinary means, as Jonah preserved by a whale, and Elijah fed by the ravens!

(2.) How we are holily, wisely, and powerfully governed by Providence, our persons and actions disposed of according to his will, either in mercy or in wrath, Dan. 4:35. 'All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; 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?' Psal. 135:6. 'Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.' While we sail the sea of this world, we may well perceive, that it is not we ourselves, but holy providence that guides the ship: Jer. 10:23. 'O Lord, (says the prophet), I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' And while men will not see this, to engage them to a life of holiness, faith, and dependance on God, they are often made to feel it, by their dashing on rocks, to the bruising, if not to the splitting of them, Isa. 26:11. 'Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see, and be ashamed.' Let me instance here but in two things, to shew that God sits King, and rules among men.

(1.) Man proposeth, but God disposeth, Lam. 3:37. 'Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?' How often are men's towering hopes levelled with the ground in a moment? Their projects are laid with all the wit and industry they are capable of, managed with all diligence and circumspection, so that they cannot see how they can misgive, but must take effect according to their wish. But he that sits in heaven, in a moment looses a pin, and all the fabric falls to the ground, their projects are baffled, their measures disconcerted, some stroke of providence, which ungodly men call an unlucky accident, mars all. This was evident in Haman's case. Sometimes it is done by an invisible hand, whereby the wheels are taken off, that they can drive no farther, Job 20:26. 'All darkness shall be hid in his secret places: a fire not blown shall consume him; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle.' How often do men find their greatest cross where they looked for their greatest comfort! and things turn about quite the contrary way to what was their design.

(2.) Man's extremity is God's opportunity, Gen. 22:14. How often does the Lord begin his work where man ends his, and can do no more? When men know not what to do, God opens a door; and when they have no firm ground of their own left to stand upon, he sets their foot on a rock, Psal. 107:27, 28. 'They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.' Their hopes are disappointed, but their fears and desperate conclusions are prevented. Something threatens them a stroke, which they see not how to escape; but an invisible arm wards off the blow; and what they look for their ruin in, there they find by an over-ruling providence, healing and upmaking, Est. 9:1. What is most unlikely is brought about, while the fairest hopes are made like the blossom that goes up as dust. Thus God baffles men's hopes on the one hand, and their fears on the other, that they may see, there is a wheel within a wheel that moves and guides all.

SECONDLY, We may consider providences with respect to their kinds, Psal. 40:5 forecited. The wisdom of God is manifold wisdom, and produces works accordingly, Psal. 104:24. And each of them is to be observed. I will instance in these three distinctions of providence.

First, Providences are either cross, or smiling and favourable. Both ought to be observed, and may be so profitably.

1. We should observe cross providences that we or others meet with. They come not by chance, but under the guidance of a holy sovereign God, Job 5:6. 'Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.' Amos 3:6. 'Shall there be an evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?' God makes himself known by them, his justice, truth, holiness, wisdom, and power, Psal. 9:16. 'The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth.' And he requires us 'to observe them, Micah 6:9. Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.' And it is a horrible provocation not to observe them, Isa. 26:11 forecited, and not to comply with the design of them; to murmur, but not kindly mourn under them, Job 35:9, 10 and 36:13.

Sometimes men meet with crosses in the way of their duty, Gal. 6:17 and sometimes in the way of sin, as Jonah. The design of both is to purge away sin,' Isa. 27:9. But, without observations, the plaister is not applied to the sore.

2. Smiling and favourable providences towards ourselves or others, Psal. 40:5. Many, in their observations of providence, are like the flies that pass over the sound places, and swarm about the sores. They are still complaining of their crosses and sorrows, and will nicely reckon them up: but as to their mercies, they will not go the length of the unjust steward, of a hundred to set down fifty, Luke 16:6. They have their language, but it cannot be understood without observation, Rom. 2:4. Dependence on God, and humility of heart, would teach us carefully to observe our mercies, Lam. 3:22. Gen. 32:10 even when we are meeting with heavy crosses, Job 1:21.

Secondly, There are great lines and small lines of providence. And,

1. We should observe the great lines of providence in signal events. Some dispensations bear such a signature of a divine hand, and so flash like lightning on men's face, that one can hardly miss to observe, but must say, as Exod. 8:19. 'This is the finger of God.' 2 Chron. 26:19, 20. 'Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand, to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead, before the priests in the house of the Lord, from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests looked upon him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence, yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him.' It is rare that God leaves himself without a witness, by some such signal providences; yet such is the perverseness of the heart of man, that as the blind cannot observe the flash of lightning, even these are lightly looked at, 1 Sam. 6:9.

2. The small lines of providence. The most minute things are guided by the all-ruling hand, Matth. 10:29, 30. And if God do manage

them, it becomes us to notice them. All the king's coin, from the massiest piece of gold to the smallest penny, bears the king's image and superscription, and therefore the least as well as the greatest is current in trade. So the smallest lines of providence pass current with those that keep a trade with heaven. Gideon notices his hearing a fellow tell a dream, Judges 7:13, &c. Heman, the removing of an acquaintance, Psal. 88:8 and Jacob, a kind word, the shew of his brother's countenance, Gen. 33:10.

Thirdly, There are common and uncommon providences.

1. We should observe common and ordinary dispensations, such as fall out every day in the common road of providence. These, because they are common, lie neglected: yet the 104th Psalm is penned on that subject. I have observed to you already, how providence appears in the constant revolutions of seasons, day and night; by the one the weary earth is refreshed, and by the other weary man, the night being fit for rest. The subjection of the beast, to man, by virtue of that divine word, Gen. 9:2 forecited, without which man could not have his necessary designs served. I add, that wonderful diversity of faces and features, without which the man could not know his wife, nor the parents their own children, nor the judge the criminal; so that without this there could be no orderly society, no government, commerce, &c. These are a sample of common providences, which studied might be of great use.

2. Uncommon and unordinary providences, as miracles, which are beyond the power of nature; extraordinary deliverances, judgments, discoveries of secret crimes; which are bright spots here and there interspersed in the web of providence, and challenge a peculiar regard.

THIRDLY, we may consider providences with respect to the time of their falling out. The works of providence run parallel with the line of time, and the continuance of the world, John 5:17.

1. We should observe the past dispensations of providence, Psal. 77:5. 'I have considered the days of old, (says Asaph), the years of ancient times.' An observer of providence must look off unto others, look into himself, and, with respect to himself and others, look back also.

(1.) Past providences towards others afford a large field for observation, reaching from the creation till now, Psal. 143:5. 'I remember the days of old,' says David. He remembered how the Lord dealt with Nimrod, Abimelech, Pharaoh, &c. What a chain of wise providences has encompassed the world in the several generations thereof? what a beautiful mixture of providences has always appeared towards the church, while the mystery of God, not yet finished, has been a carrying on! What very remarkable things have fallen out in the life and death of particular persons! From all the particulars of these we might draw something for our spiritual advantage, as the bee from every flower extracts her honey.

(2.) Past providences towards ourselves in particular afford also a large field, reaching from our first being till now. Look back and consider that wonderful providence that framed thee in the womb, Job 10:10, 11. The Psalmist finds himself in a transport of wonder upon this reflection, Psal. 139:14, &c. Consider how the same kind providence brought thee safe out of the womb, that the womb was not made thy grave, or that thou wast not stifled in the birth, Psal. 22:9. How thou wast provided for and preserved from the dangers in infancy, by the same kind providence, whilst thou couldest do nothing for thyself, Psal. 22:9, 10. Observe the providences of God towards thee in thy childhood, youth, middle age, and forward to the present time; and thou must say as old Jacob, Gen. 48:15. 'God fed me all my life long unto this day;' and with the Psalmist, Psal. 71:17. 'O God thou hast taught me from my youth.' Observe how God gave thee such and such education, ordered thy lot in such and such a place in his earth, and in such sort as he has done, how he brought thee into such and such company, saved thee from such and such dangers, &c.

2. We should observe the present dispensations of providence towards ourselves and others, Zech. 6:1, 2. It is a stream that still runs by us, like those rivers that bring down the golden ore, Psal. 65:11. By day nor night it ceaseth not, Psal. 19:2. Providence with the one hand bids us stoop and take on the day's load of benefits, Psal. 68:19 and with the other hand lays on the day's burden of evils, Matth. 6 ult. And therefore that is our duty, Psal. 4:4. 'Commune with your own hearts upon your bed and be still;' that having made our observations through the day, we may cast up our accounts against night.

Thus far of the objects on which we are to make observations.

III. The next general head is, to shew what we are to observe in providences. It is not enough to observe the work itself, but we must be as particular as we can about it. This is like the bruising of the spices and the pouring out of the ointment, whereby their fragrantcy is best-perceived. There are these nine things I recommend to your observation.

1. The timing of providences, the great weight of a dispensation sometimes lies in this very circumstance, that then it came, and neither sooner nor later. And O the admirable wisdom that appears in thus jointing of them! Gen. 24:45. Abraham's servant prays to be guided to the woman appointed to be Isaac's wife; and in the very time Rebekah comes. Gideon in the very time when he comes near the enemy's camp, hears one of them telling his dream, Judges 7:13, &c. Uzziah is smitten in the very time when he is attempting to offer incense upon the altar of incense. And here particularly observe the timing of providences,

(1.) With respect to the frame of our spirit; for much lies in observing what frame of spirit a mercy or stroke overtakes us in. So the church observes the timing of her deliverance, that it came when they were not looking for it, Psal. 126:1. And that made it look the greater. Job observes, that his trouble came on him when he was far from

security, and that made him wear it the better, Job 3 ult. Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar's trouble began when their hearts had quite forgot God, and that made the heavy hand of God the heavier. O notice carefully what frame of spirit your mercies or crosses find you in; ye will see much in that,

(2.) With respect to your circumstances. How often does kind providence catch the child at the very halting, Psal. 94:18 and an angry God set fire on people's nest just when they had well feathered it, and throw them down when they are just come to their height? Job 20:23. So he did with holy Job, chap. 29:18. Observe it, and ye will find either a sting or a sweet ingredient in what you meet with.

There is a piece of holy foresight that an exercised Christian may have by observing the timing of a dispensation. If thou be such an one, and wouldst know whether a mercy thou hast got will last or no, how was it timed; came it to thee when thy spirit was weaned, lying at the Lord's feet? Thou hast a sure hold of it. But came it when thy spirit was upon the fret, unhumbled, unsubdued, and thou wouldest needs have it? It will stick short while in thy hand, Psal. 18:17, 18. Hos. 13:11. Fruit plucked off the tree of providence ere it be ripe, will last short while, and set their teeth on edge while they have it.

2. The beginnings and dawnings of providences, Psal. 130:6. 'My soul,' says the Psalmist, 'waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning.' So did those mentioned, Luke 1:66. 'All they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be?' Sometimes a work that God has upon the wheel of providence will be but like the cloud, as big as a man's hand; but being observed, it will spread. Good Jacob observed the dawnings of providence in Joseph's case, though he little knew what a bright day it would end in, Gen. 37:11. It may be long betwixt the beginning and the end; but it is good to notice, as the holy penman does, the door of hope a little after the midnight of the captivity, Jer. 52:31. There is a great advantage in being able to follow the thread of providence from the beginning of it.

3. The progress of providence, endeavouring always to notice the several steps of it, Luke 2:19 and 51 and to follow the thread. For God ordinarily brings great works to pass by degrees, that so men that are weak may have the greater advantage for observation, Hos. 6:3. Mercies and strokes may be long a-working, the decree may go long ere it bring forth: but much of the wisdom of God may be seen in the several steps it takes, and the advances it makes.

4. The turns of providence. The wheel of providence is a wheel within a wheel, and sometimes it runs upon the one side, and sometimes on the other. Observe the change of the sides. For providence to our view has many turnings and windings, and yet really it is going straight forward, Zech. 14:7. It runs fast to the evening with the church there; but behold the turn, 'In the evening it shall be light.' See the turn of the wheel in Joseph's case, Gen. 41:14 in Pharaoh's taking him from prison; in the church's case, Est. 6:3, 4 in Ahasuerus's inquiring whether any honour had been done to Mordecai for his discovering a plot formed against the king's life; and in that of Hagar and Ishmael, Gen. 21:17 in the angel's calling to them out of heaven, to know what ailed them. And ye may see the wheel ordinarily turns at the brow of the hill.

5. The end of providence, James 5:11. There seemed to be many dismal circumstances in Job's case, concurring to his ruin. His substance goes, his family, his health and ease; his wife bids him blaspheme and die; his friends represent his case as that of an hypocrite; many a black thread appears in the web: but O what a beautiful piece does it appear when it is wrought out! Job 42:10, 12.

6. The mixture of providence. The unmixed dispensation is reserved for another world; there is mercy unmixed, Rev. 22:1 and judgment unmixed, chap. 14:10. But here all we meet with is mixed. There is never a mercy we get, but there is a cross in it; and never a cross, but there is a mercy in it. Observe the mixture of your mercies, to make you humble and heavenly; for the fairest rose that grows here has a prickle with it, and there is a tartness in our sweetest enjoyments.

Observe the mixture of your crosses, to make you patient and thankful; for the bitterest pill God gives you to swallow has a vehicle of mercy, Lam. 3:22. 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.' And wise observers will see many mercies in one cross, if they will but allow themselves to see how God could and might have made it worse.

7. The concurrence of providences. Sometimes several dispensations of providence meet together in one's case. One while there may be a meeting of several mercies together, which make a golden spot of time among them to a person. At other time several afflictions meet together, one wave comes on the back of another, till the furnace is by several coals heated seven times. Job had experience of both in his case, a train of troubles first, and a train of mercies succeeded. Jacob, when he came homeward to Canaan, had a train of troubles that waited on him. And in the case of the people of God, a very fair blink forebodes a heavy shower. The duty in that case is, 'In the day of prosperity be joyful; but in the day of adversity consider,' Eccl. 7:14. Sometimes there is a meeting of several kinds, and one gets his bed strewed with a rose and a thorn, &c.

8. The design and language of providences, Micah 6:9. They are the works of infinite wisdom, and therefore cannot be without a design. And seeing God speaks to us by his providences, and we ought to hear and obey when he speaks, we should be very careful to know the meaning of dispensations, that we may fall in with the call of providence. And the Lord takes it heinously ill if we do not, Jer. 7:7. If it be dark and doubtful let us lay it before the Lord in prayer, set it in the light of the word, and meditate on it till we find it out, Psal. 73:16, 17.

9. Lastly, The harmony of providences. There is a fourfold harmony to be observed in providences.

1st., Their harmony with the word, which they agree with as the copy with the original. The sealed book of God's decrees is opened in

providences. Hence that of the opening the seals, in the Revelation. And the book of the scripture is written over again in providence, so that as in water face answereth to face, so do God's works to his word, Psal. 48:8. Providence is a most regular building, and the word is the draught of that building. Providence is a curious piece of embroidery, and the word is the pattern. So that in providence the word has been a-fulfilling ever since it was given, and still it is a-fulfilling, and the pattern will be wrought out when the mystery of God is finished, and not till then, Mat. 5:18. And thus it is a-fulfilling, not only by the extraordinary but ordinary providences. If a man quarrel any thing in a building or embroidery, there must be a comparing it with the draught or pattern of the house or embroidery, and he will be satisfied. Psal. 73:16, 17.

Ye will never observe providences aright, if ye do not observe their harmony with the word; for the word is the instituted means of the conveyance of influences, Isa. 59 ult. By neglecting of this, some dispensations prove stumbling-blocks, over which some break their necks, Mal. 3:15. Many draw harsh and ungodly conclusions against others, whereby they only discover their own ignorance of the scriptures, and of the method of providence, Luke 13:1–5. John 9:2, 3 like Job's censorious uncharitable friends, Job 5:1.

O Sirs, learn this lesson, that all providences which you, or I, or any person or society in the world meet with, are accomplishments of the scripture. And they may be reduced to and explained by one of these five things. Either they are accomplishments of,

(1.) Scripture-doctrines, Psal. 48:8. 'As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God.' May not every one see, that few great men are good men? Do not stumble at it; it is but a fulfilling of the scripture, 1 Cor. 1:26. 'Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.' That the safest condition for the soul is the medium between great wealth and pinching poverty, according to Agur's prayer, Prov. 30:8, 9. 'Give me neither poverty, nor riches, feed me with food convenient

for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.'—That Satan and the corruptions of the heart are sometimes most busy, when people are setting themselves to serve the Lord, agreeable to Paul's experience, Rom. 7:21. 'I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me.'—That the generality of the hearers of the gospel are not savingly wrought on by it, according to these scripture-passages, Isa. 53:1. 'Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' Matt. 22:14. 'Many are called, but few are chosen.' And so in other cases. Or of,

(2.) Scripture-prophecies, 1 Tim. 1:18. 'This I commit unto thee, O Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee.' What astonishing providences were the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, the expulsion of the Canaanites, Cyrus' overturning the Babylonian empire, and loosing the captivity, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans? But all these were but a fulfilling of scripture-prophecies. What an astonishing providence was the rise, reign, and continuance of the Antichristian kingdom, and the reformation of religion in many nations, after they had lain many hundreds of years under Popish darkness; These are the fulfilling of the apocalyptic prophecies. And what an astonishing providence was the introduction of the gospel into Britain, and the preservation of it hitherto, amidst so many attempts to destroy it? It is an accomplishment of that prophecy, Isa. 42:4. 'The isles shall wait for his law.' Or of,

(3.) Scripture-promises, Josh. 21:45. 'There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel: all came to pass,' Psal. 119:65. 'Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according unto thy word.' You see the orderly revolutions of the year, and seasons thereof; that is the fulfilling of the scripture, Gen. 8:22.—That those who have suffered loss in the cause of Christ, have been bountifully treated with so much in hand, that they have had more content and inward satisfaction in that, than any other time of their life, is a fulfilling of scripture, Mark 10:29, 30. 'There is

no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.'—That the way of duty has been not only the most honourable but the safest way, is an accomplishment of scripture-promises, Prov. 10:9. 'He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely.' Chap. 16:7. 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.'—That communion with God is to be had in ordinances, is conformable to promise, Exod. 20:24. 'In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.' Or of,

(4.) Scripture threatenings, Lev. 10:3. 'This is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the congregation I will be glorified.' Hos. 7:12. 'I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.'—You may observe how dangerous it is to meddle for the ruin of the work and people of God, from that passage, Micah 4:11, 12. 'Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.' How their faces are covered with shame that despise the Lord, from 1 Sam. 2:30. 'The Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed, that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.'—How the faster people clave to their temporal comforts, they have the looser hold, from Ezek. 24:25. 'I will take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and their daughters.'—How people may run long in an evil way, but their foot will slip at length, from Deut. 32:35. 'Their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.'

(5.) Lastly, Or they are the parallels of scripture-examples. Psal. 143:5. 'I remember the days of old.' The serious observer will find a surprising fulness here, as in the other parts of scripture. I will instance in three very astonishing pieces of providence, which often put good men to their wits end, to know how to account for them; yet being brought to the glass of scripture-examples, such a harmony appears betwixt the one and the other, as cannot but be extremely satisfying.

(1.) Sometimes we see men walking contrary to God, and yet providence smiling on them, and caressing them, as if they were the darlings of heaven. This has puzzled the best of men. It put Jeremiah sore to it, chap. 12:1, 2, 'Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit; thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.' It was near carrying Asaph quite off his feet, Psal. 73:13. 'Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. But, O! is there not a beautiful harmony in this with scripture-examples? How did all Israel as one man back Absalom in his rebellion? How did Haman rise till he could come no higher, unless he had got the throne? And the tyrant Nebuchadnezzar carries all before him according to his wish, &c. And scripture-doctrine unriddles the mystery, Psal. 92:5, 6, 7. 'O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knoweth not: neither doth a fool understand this. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish: it is that they shall be destroyed for ever.'

(2.) How often do astonishing strokes light on those who are dear to God, as if God selected them from among the rest of the world, to shew his hatred of them? Eccl. 8:14, 'There is a vanity which is done upon the earth, that there be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked: again, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous.' O Sirs,

this has been very puzzling to those that have met with it. But behold the harmony with scripture-examples; as in Job's case. Eli loses his two sons at one blow, his daughter-in-law dies, and himself breaks his neck. Aaron the saint of God has two sons slain by fire from heaven. The apostles were set forth as appointed for death, &c. 1 Cor. 4:9. Babylon is at ease when Zion lies in ruins. See Lam. 2:20. But further,

(3.) How often has it been the lot of some of God's people to meet with heavy strokes from the hands of the Lord, when they have been going in the way which God himself bade them take? That will try people to purpose that observe these things. But blessed be God for the Bible, that lets us see this is no untrodden path. Jacob has an express command to return to Canaan, Gen. 31:13. But O what a train of heavy trials attend him! Laban pursues him as a thief, Esau meets him with four hundred to slay him, the angel puts the knuckle of his thigh out of joint, his daughter is ravished by the Shechemites, his sons murder the Shechemites, Deborah dies, and his beloved wife Rachel dies, and Reuben defiles Bilhah. It was no wonder he said, 'Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.' Gen. 47:9.

2dly; There is a harmony of providences among themselves. It is observed of the wheels, that the four had 'one likeness,' Ezek. 1:16. The dispensations of providence of the same kind, at the greatest distance of time from one another, have a beautiful likeness to one another. And therefore Solomon observes, Eccl. 1:10. 'Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.' Did ever any meet with such a temptation and trial as I have met with? say some. But says the apostle, 1 Cor. 10:13. 'There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man.' Was ever any afflicted at the rate that I am? says another. But hear what the apostle says. 1 Pet. 4:12. 'Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.' See how Solomon accounts for this, Eccl. 1:9, 10, 11. 'The Thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done; and there is

no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come, with those that shall come after.'

(1.) They are all wrought after the same pattern, namely, the word, in the various parts thereof. The same word which was accomplished on a nation or person thousands of years ago, is accomplished on others at this very day. The same word fulfilled in one's case some time ago, may be fulfilled over again when their case comes to be the same it was then.

(2.) They have all the same specific end, to reward or punish, check, direct, &c. And where the ends are alike, it is no wonder the measures be so too. God designed to make his enemies fall, and to deliver his church at the brink of ruin, in Esther's days; and so in ours of late. Hence the plot was suffered to succeed; and when all seemed to be done, providence struck a sudden stroke, and turned the wheel on the wicked. But is there any thing new here? was it not just so in Esther's days?

It is good to observe this harmony; for by these means one sees himself in a paved road, and so may the better know how to steer his course. When one finds himself in a road where providence has led him before, he may consult his way-marks that he set up when he was there formerly, and so may travel it the more easily. And the same may he do when he is in the road, where he observes others have been before him. He may beware of the steps where they stumbled, and keep the road by which he sees they got through.

3dly, There is a harmony of providences with their design and end, Deut. 32:4. 'All his ways are judgment.' There is an admirable fitness in God's measures to reach his holy ends. The wheels were full of eyes as guided by infinite wisdom; and whithersoever the living creatures had a face looking, the wheels had a side to go on.

Whatsoever God created was very good, Gen. 1 ult. that is, very fit for the end of its creation. And so are all God's works of providence exactly answering their end. It is often observed of the wheels, They turned not when they went, as a chariot must needs do, when the charioteer has driven the horses the wrong way. If they were to go to another quarter, they were but to go on that side that looked that way all along. There is a twofold harmony to be observed here.

(1.) The harmony of every piece of providence with its particular end and design. Where there lie a great many pieces of wright-work framed and shapen by the tradesman, should a bungler take them in hand, he cannot join them; he complains that one mortise is too strait, and another too wide: but the artificer can sort them, and put each in its own place, and they answer exactly. So it is with providence. Every piece answers to its end, Eccl. 3:11. 'He hath made every thing beautiful in his time.' There is a glaring instance of this in the strokes that providence reaches sinners to punish them for particular sins, where there is such an affinity betwixt the sin and the stroke, that the sin may be read in the punishment. This is done many ways, which yet perhaps may be all reduced to one of these four. The stroke answers the sin, either,

(1.) In time, the stroke following hard at the heels of the provocation, as 1 Kings 13:4. When Jeroboam put forth his hand from the altar, saying, lay hold on the man of God, immediately his hand dried up. So God punished Dinah's gadding abroad unnecessarily, David's security by his adultery, and Peter's going into the high priest's hall. Or,

(2.) In kind, whereby God justly pays home a person in the same coin as he sinned. Adonibezek is a notable instance of this, Judg. 1:7. 'Threescore and ten kings (says he) having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table; as I have done, so God hath requited me.' David's injury to Uriah's bed is punished by Absalom's doing the same to his. So many disobedient

to their parents are paid home by their children again. Some wrong and oppress others, and afterwards others deal just so by them. Or,

(3.) In likeness, the stroke bearing a resemblance to the sin. The Sodomites burn in lust, and they are burnt with fire from heaven. Nadab and Abihu sinned by offering strange fire, and they are consumed with fire from the Lord. Jacob beguiles his father, pretending he was Esau, and Laban beguiles him with Leah instead of Rachel. As sinners measure to God in spirituals, he measures to them in temporals, 1 Cor. 11:30.

(4.) In flat contrariety. Adam will be as God, and he becomes like the beast that perisheth. David's pride of the numbers of his people is punished by the loss of seventy thousand of them. Rachel must have children, or she cannot live; she gets them, and dies in bringing one forth. The Jews crucify the Lord of glory, lest the Romans should come and take away their place and their nation; and that is the very thing that brings them.

(2.) The harmony of the several pieces among themselves with respect to their common end and design. And here there is often a beautiful mixture of contraries to make together one beautiful piece, Rom. 8:28. 'All things shall work together.' Strike the strings of a viol one by one, they make but a sorry sound; but strike them together by art, they make a pleasant harmony. The nicest piece of work lying in pieces, is but a confused heap. Joseph is sold for a slave; and he is brought into Pharaoh's presence. How contrary do these seem? but the former was as necessary as the latter to accomplish the design of providence. Haman is advanced, and the good deed done by Mordecai is forgotten, till the fittest time of remembering it. Both harmonize to Haman's ruin. Providence loses no ground in all the compasses we imagine it takes: every circumstance is necessary to the carrying on of the common end.

4thly, There is a harmony of providences with the prayers of the people of God, that have the Spirit of prayer, Gen. 32 compared with

33:10. Many dispensations of providence are the returns of prayer. This seems to be the ground of that conclusion, Psal. 41:11. 'By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me;' and puts an additional sweetness in mercies. There is one general rule as to the hearing of prayer, John 16:23. Whatsoever prayers are believingly put up in Christ's name are heard. And so we should notice the harmony of providence with prayer. Concerning which I offer these five observations.

(1.) That where God has no mind to give such a mercy, the spirit of prayer for that mercy will be restrained, Jer. 7:16. 'Pray not thou for this people,' &c. As, upon the other hand, when God minds his people a favour, he will open their lips to pray for it, Ezek. 36:37. 'Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.' And this is no wonder, if we consider, that the Spirit of the Lord dictated the word whereof providence is the accomplishment, and the same Spirit guides the wheel of providence, Ezek. 1:20 and the same Spirit is the author of acceptable prayer, by which the sap of the word is sucked out in providence, Rom. 8:26, 27.

(2.) God hears believing prayers, either by granting the mercy itself which is sought, as Gen. 24:45 in Rebekah's appearing at the well, and drawing water as Abraham's servant had prayed for; or else the equivalent, something that is as good, 2 Cor. 12:8, 9 in Paul's obtaining grace sufficient for him. Either of these ways providence brings the answer of prayer. For God's bond of promise that faith lays hold on, and pleads in prayer, may be paid either (as it were) in money or money-worth. And the harmony betwixt prayer and providence is to be acknowledged either of the ways.

(3.) Providence may for a time seem to go quite contrary to the saints' prayers, and yet afterwards come to meet exactly. It is an astonishing piece of providence that the saints sometimes meet with, namely, that a case never is more hopeless than just after they have had a particular concern upon their spirits before the Lord about it;

so that they are made to say, as Psal. 65:5. 'By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation.' But it is very usual in the Lord's dealings with his people to pass a sentence of death on their mercies ere they get them, as he did with the Israelites in Egypt, who were worse treated by Pharaoh after the application made to him to let them go, than before, Exod. 5 ult. Providence acts like a man that is to fetch a stroke, swinging the axe back, that he may come forward with the greater vigour.

(4.) Providence often very discernibly keeps pace with the prayers of his people, that as they go up or down, so it goes. An eminent instance whereof we have Exod. 17:11 in that while Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. Hence sometimes a matter will go fairly on, while the soul is helped to believe and wrestle; but when unbelief makes the soul fag, the wheel begins to stand too. And it is no wonder this takes place, where the same Spirit is in the creature, and in the wheel.

(5.) Lastly, Providence may sweetly harmonize with the spirit of prayer, and the believer's expression in prayer, and yet not with the desires of their own spirit, which perhaps they went to lay before the Lord, Rom. 8:26, 27. The not distinguishing of these two makes many see a great jarring betwixt providence and their prayers, while in very deed there is a notable harmony betwixt them. And if they would carefully mark the words in which, under the influence of the Spirit, they presented their petitions to the Lord, they might find them wonderfully agree with the dispensation of providence, though not with the desire of their own spirits.

IV. I proceed, in the next place, to assign reasons why Christians should wisely observe providences.

1. Because they are God's works, Psal. 135:6. The world, in the framing of it, was not a work of chance; neither is it so in the management of it. Whoever be the instruments and second causes by which any thing falls out in our lot, God has the guiding of the

wheels, and has a negative on the whole creation, Lam. 3:37. 'Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?' Meet me with a favourable event? we are debtors to God for it, As Abraham's servant acknowledged, on the favourable answer he received relating to Rebekah, in his bowing his head, and worshipping the Lord, Gen. 24:26. Do we meet with a cross one? It is the finger of God, though we see a creature's whole hand in it, Amos 3:6. 'Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?' Now, seeing they are his works, they ought to be observed.

2. Because they are great works, Psal. 111:2. 'The work of the Lord is great.' Every work of providence bears the signature of a divine hand upon it. But the stamp is sometimes so fine, and our eyes so dull, that we are slow to perceive it. I told you that there are small lines of providence as well as great: but the great God does nothing but what is great and suitable to himself. Though some of his works are comparatively small, they are all great absolutely. And therefore with respect to those I called small ones, I must say to you, as Deut. 1:17. 'Ye shall hear the small as well as the great.' And good reason is there for it. For,

(1.) The smaller a piece of work is, the greater and more curious is the workmanship. Galen confessed the hand, and extolled the wisdom of God in the thigh of a gnat. An ordinary artificer will fit out a mill; but the small wath requires a curious hand, and pictures of the least size shew most of the painter's skill. That frogs should have been a plague to Pharaoh, or Herod eaten up of worms, was more admirable, than if the one had been plagued with an armed host, and the other devoured by a lion. The rats devouring hats and poppies. (Turn. hist. Prov. chap. 112.) was truly more admirable than the conquests of Alexander and Cæsar both.

(2.) Great things may be lying hid in the bosom of very minute and ordinary things. Search into the rise of that wonderful turn of providence with the church in Esther's days, and ye shall find it to be the king's falling off his rest one night, Est. 6:1 of that wonderful

overthrow of the Moabites, and ye will find it a mere fancy, 2 Kings 3:22, 23. The curse of God may be in the miscarrying of a basket of bread, Deut. 28:17. And it may be big with a great mercy. They say the whale is mightily beholden to the little fish called musculus, which swims as a guide before her, without which she would be in danger in straits and betwixt great rocks. The little cloud like a man's hand often darkens the heavens ere all be done.

3. Because they are often very mysterious works, and therefore they need observation, Psal. 92:5. It is necessary to give us right views of providence, and to keep us from mistakes. The making judgment of providences is a very tender point, wherein the best of men have gone far wrong. Was not Jacob far out when he said, Gen. 42:36. 'All these things are against me,' if we compare the promise, Rom. 8:28. 'All things shall work together for good,' &c. and the event too? Many a time the outside of providence is very unlike it inside. The greatest cross may be wrapt up in what we take to be our greatest comfort; and the greatest comfort may be inwrapt in what we call our greatest cross. Observation must break the shell, that we may look in.

4. Because they are always perfect works. They will abide the strictest search and the most narrow inquiry, Deut. 32:4. Whatever faults we find with them, as we do many, it is for want of due observation. But at length he shall gain that testimony and recantation, 'He hath done all things well,' Mark 7:37. In these his works no flaw is to be found, no mistake; nothing too much, nothing too little; nothing too soon done, nothing too late done; nothing misplaced, nothing in or over; nay, nothing done that is not best done; nothing that man or angel could make better. The world will startle at this as a paradox: but faith will believe it, on the solid ground of infinite wisdom, though sense contradict it, Isa. 38:8. Jer. 12:1. O that they who will debate this truth would come near and observe.

5. Lastly, Because they are speaking works, Micah 6:9. They speak Heaven's language to the earth, and therefore should be observed. And they speak,

(1.) Of him, Psal. 19:2. They preach to us that he is, what a God he is, how holy, just, wise, good, and powerful, &c. We may see there his perfections as in a glass. Each pile of grass speaks a God, a wise, good, and powerful one. So many creatures as there are, so many mouths to speak of him. And it is man's work to observe and hear. When God had replenished the heavens with sun, moon, and stars, and the earth with variety of creatures, the creation was still imperfect till man was made. For what avails the musical instrument, if there be nobody to play on it?

(2.) For him. Cross providences speak for him, Micah 6:9. And favourable providences also, Rom. 2:4. Hereby sinners are instructed in the way they should go, Psal. 32:8 reproveth, as Joseph's brethren; and comforted, as Paul was, Phil. 2:27 And, in a word, they call us from sin unto God; by them, where the word goes before, Christ knocks at the door of sinners' hearts, and calls for access.

I come now to the improvement of this doctrine. And,

I. It may serve for lamentation. Ah! may we not say, Who is wise to observe these things? Wise observers of providence are thin sown in the world; because there are few exercised to godliness. God has given us enough to observe in the public and in our private case. He is speaking by his providence to the land, he is speaking loudly at this day to the parish, to you and to me, and to every one in particular. But, alas! it is not observed to purpose. Graceless people are presumptuous, and will not observe; and even many godly are heedless, and do not observe. There are these six evidences that this wise observation of providence is very rare.

1. How many are there who see God no more in their mercies and crosses, than if they were a parcel of atheists, that did not think there were a God, or that believed no providence at all? If they get a mercy, God is not owned in it; they sacrifice to their own net. If they get a cross, they cry out by reason of the arm of the Almighty. But none

saith, Where is God my Maker! In all the turns of their life and lot, they never seriously look to the wheel within the wheel.

2. How many are there to whom God in his providence is speaking plain language, that he who runs may read it, yet they will not understand it? Psal. 82:5. God plagues the Philistines for the ark most visibly, yet they are at a loss, saying, It may be it is a chance. Balaam's ass refuses to carry him forward on the way, but he is in a rage against her. God meets sinners in their way, with speaking providences; but on they go; they do not hear, they will not be stopped. Like the dog, they snarl at the stone, but look not to the hand that threw it.

3. How few are exercised to know the design of providences that they meet with? Many signal mercies they meet with, but put not the question, What is God saying to me by these things? Many a heavy dispensation they meet with, partly by the rod's hanging over their heads, partly by its lying on them; yet they never seriously take up Job's exercise, chap. 10:2. 'I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.' These things let them come and go with as little concern to know the design of them, as if they had none.

4. How few are exercised to comply with the design of providences, to accommodate themselves to the divine dispensations? Job 33:13, 14. If men were wise observers of providence, it would be their constant practice to be answering the several calls thereof, still facing about towards it, as the shadow on the dial to the body of the sun, Psal. 27:8. 'When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' But, alas! men meet with humbling providences, but they are not exercised to mortify their pride: they meet with awakening providences, yet they are not exercised to rouse up themselves to their duty: they meet with afflicting providences in worldly things, yet they are not exercised to get their hearts weaned from the world; they meet with reproofing providences, yet they are not exercised to repent and mourn over the sins thereby pointed out.

But they really strive with their Maker, and while he draws by his providence, they hold fast, and will not let it go, Jer. 6:29.

5. The little skill that people have in judging of providences. A man will readily have skill in his own trade: but it is no wonder to see people unacquainted with things in which their business does not lie. O what commentaries on providence are in the world, that destroy the text! How miserably is the doctrine of particular dispensations perverted! Despisers of God and his ordinances are very easy; and therefore the world concludes, 'it is vain to serve God, and that there is no profit in keeping his ordinances,' Mal. 3:14. 'The proud are called happy,' ver. 15. They are best that have least to do with them. Good men meet with signal strokes: the world concludes that they are hypocrites, and they must be guilty of some heinous wickedness beyond other people, Job 5:1. Luke 13:1, 2. And a thousand such blunders there are.

6. Lastly, They rank poverty in respect of Christian experience found among professors. What a learned Egyptian said to a Greek, *Vos Græci semper pueri*, may be said to many in whom there is some good thing towards the God of Israel. Ye professors are ever children, 2 Cor. 3:1. Heb. 5:12. And what is the reason, but that we have never yet fallen close to the study of observing providences? See the text. There is a daily market in providence, but ye do no trade in it; and therefore ye are always poor. There is perhaps a lesson put in your hands this day, that ye had several years since, but ye did not learn it; and so it is now as great a mystery to you as then.

USE II. Of exhortation. O be exhorted to become wise observers of providence. O fall at length upon this piece of practical religion. Many of us have it, I fear, yet to begin; and all have need to mend their pace in it. For enforcing this exhortation, I shall give you some other points of doctrine from the words, by way of motives and direction, and so shut up this subject.

For motives take these doctrines.

1. Wise observing of providence is a rare thing in the world: Who is wise, and will observe these things, as the words may bear. And the reason is, the truth of religion is rare, and close and tender walking with God is yet rarer, Matth. 22:14 and 25:5. The most part of the world go the broad way to destruction, Matth. 7:14 and therefore they are not concerned to observe the works of the Lord. Many Christians there are, that, alas! in these dregs of time are not exercised Christians. Up then and be doing, and conspire not with the multitude to put a slight on God's speaking by his providence, lest his fury break forth as fire en you with the rest, John 6:66.

The more rare the observing of providence is, it is the more precious. Stones may be gathered from the surface of the earth, while gold must be dug with much labour out of the bowels of it, The finest things are hardest to be won at: *Nulla virtus sine lapide*. As Christ himself had a stone rolled on him, so every grace, work, and way of Christ has one. But there is a pearl underneath; and the heavier the stone, the more precious is the pearl. Come and see in this particular.

II. They that are wise will be observers of providences, Whoso is wise, and will observe these things. And at what pitch your wisdom arrives, your observation of providences will follow it, Eccl. 2:14. The eating of the forbidden fruit cast all mankind into a spiritual madness; and the truth is, the most part of the world are in that respect as madmen, regarding neither the word nor works of the Lord. But if thou wert come to thyself, it would not be so, Luke 15:17. How long hast thou acted as a fool, in matters of greatest weight, being penny-wise and pound-foolish, careful for a mite, and in the meantime letting talents slip through thy fingers? Luke 10:41, 42.

O Sirs, how do unobserved providences aggravate our guilt, and increase our accounts! When the day shall come, the Lord will reckon with the sinner, for all the pains he has bestowed on him to bring him to himself: when his slighting the call of the word shall be aggravated with so many items of providences. How will the sinner look, when the Lord shall say, Did I not give thee such and such

mercies to draw thee from thy sin? lay such and such crosses in thy way to drive thee from it? What hast thou done with all the instructive up-stirring providences I gave thee? with all the providential warnings, rebukes, &c. given thee? Remember that passage, Prov. 9:12. 'If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.'

III. The wise observation of providences is a soul-enriching trade. They shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. This is so on two accounts, both deducible from the text.

1. That which seems the most barren piece of providence, becomes fruitful by wise observation. Some of these things in the text are very cross providences; yet even by them one shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. Behold a holy art, whereby ye may not only gather honey out of every sweet-smelling flower, but may gather grapes of spiritual profit off the thorns of afflictions, and figs of thistles. The apostle tells us a mystery, of a pleasure in infirmities, distresses, &c. 2 Cor. 12:10. Wise observation would let you into the secret.

2. It has the promise, in the text. God has said, such a one shall know more and feel more in religion than others. 'To him that hath (i. e. improves what he has) shall be given.' And the more a man sets himself to observe, the more he will get to observe, and the more sappy will his observations be. By the wise observation of providences,

(1.) Sin and duty in particular cases is discovered. No dispensations of providence whatsoever can warrant us to go over the belly of God's commands, 1 Sam. 13:11, &c. But where two lawful things are before us, providence may point out what is present duty, and which of them we are to choose. And so the word teacheth, Psal. 32:8. 'I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.'

(2.) One gets a clear view of the divine authority of the scriptures, very necessary in such an age wherein atheism, profaneness, and immorality so much abound. For the wise observer sees the fulfilling of it exactly, and so is confirmed. While he observes providences, he sees scripture-doctrines, promises, threatenings, and prophecies accomplished, and the parallels of scripture-examples; and so reads the truth of God's word in his works, Psal. 58:11.

(3.) Hereby a Christian is established in the good ways of the Lord, and that by those very things that make others to stagger, yea, themselves also, when they do not observe, Psal. 73:22, &c. It is the woful estrangedness to this exercise that makes so many here-away there-away professors, tossed about with every wind that rises, while amidst all these reelings the wise observer sits firm like the expert mariner among the boisterous waves, Psal. 143:5.

(4.) Hereby a Christian gets store of experiences, to lay by him for use at another time. How did Joseph sustain Egypt in time of the dearth, but by the corn laid up in time of plenty? So the Psalmist says, 'O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar,' Psalm 42:6. But for want of this some people are always from hand to mouth, always to begin; ever learning, never coming to the knowledge of the truth, Mark 6:52.

(5.) Lastly, It is a nurse to all the graces of the Spirit. It is a notable help to faith, Exod. 14 ult. A short-limbed faith will reach far up, when it stands upon experiences.—To love; see the text. Now, the love of God perceived kindles the flame of love in us.—To patience and waiting on the Lord; for observation will keep them from being hasty while the work is on the wheel, Psal. 37:2.—To hope; 'for experience worketh hope,' Rom. 5:4; for former mercies are pledges of future ones.—To contempt of the world.—To holy fear, Exod. 14 ult.—To delight and joy in the Lord, Psal. 92:4.—To self-loathing, and thankfulness, Psal. 144:1, 2, 3, &c.

And now for direction take this doctrine, There is need of true wisdom to fit a man for right observation of providence. And that wisdom is,

1. Spiritual wisdom, 1 Cor. 2:15. Carnal wisdom is no good observer of providence, as the blind man is no fit judge of colours.

2. Scripture wisdom; for the scripture is the pattern, and providence the work. They that study the language of Heaven in providence, must consult the scriptures as the dictionary for that language.

3. Practical wisdom, Psal. 111:2. Even scripture-notions floating in the head will do but little service, but sinking into the heart, reduced into practice, will be of good use here. And the more to fit you for this work, take these following lessons from the word concerning providences.

(1.) The design of Providence may sometimes lie very hid; and therefore it is good to wait, and not to be rash, Psal. 77:19.

(2.) Sometimes providence seems to forget the promise; but it is not so, but only the time of the promise is not then come, Gen. 15:4 with 16:2.

(3.) Sometimes providence seems to go quite cross to the promise, and his work to go contrary to his word. But wait ye, they will assuredly meet, Gen. 22.

(4.) Ofttimes providence favours a design, which yet will be blasted in the end, for that it was not the purpose of God, Jonah 1:3.

(5.) Ofttimes providence will run counter in appearance to the real design, and by a tract of dispensations will seem to cross it more, and more till the grave-stone appear to be laid on it. And yet, 'at evening-time it shall be light,' Zech. 14:7.

(6.) Providence many times lays aside the most likely means and brings about his work by that which nothing is expected of, 2 Kings 5:11, 12.

(7.) Lastly, Sometimes providence works by contraries, as the blind man was cured with laying clay on his eyes.

Learn to live by faith, and be frequent in meditation and self-examination, and be much in prayer.

Thus I have laid before you the duty of observing providences. May the Lord pity them that make no conscience of practising what they hear, and get nothing of all but a testimony against themselves. And may he give us all understanding in all things.

OF THE COVENANT OF WORKS

GEN. 2:16, 17.—And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat: but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.

HAVING already shown, that God from all eternity decreed whatever comes to pass; that he executes his decrees in the works of creation and providence; that he made all things of nothing by the word of his power; that he made man upright, adorned with his moral image, consisting in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; and that his providence, extends to all his creatures, and all their actions: that which now falls to be considered is the special act of providence which God exercised towards man, in the estate wherein he was created, namely, the covenant of works which God made with Adam. This covenant is sometimes called the covenant of works, because works, or obedience, was the condition of it; and sometimes the

covenant of life, because life was promised therein as the reward of obedience.

In discoursing from this subject, I shall,

I. Shew that God made a covenant with Adam, when he created him in a state of innocency.

II. Explain the nature of this covenant.

III. Shew why God entered into this covenant with man.

IV. Make improvement.

I. That God made a covenant with Adam when he had created him in a state of innocency, appears from this text with the context. For here are the parties contracting, God and man.

1. Here is the duty which God requires of man, not eating of the forbidden fruit; which was no command of the natural law, but superadded thereto, and implied his obligation to observe that law much more.

2. A threatening in case man should break this positive law, Thou shalt die.

3. A promise of life in case of continued obedience. For the threatening manifestly implies another proposition, viz. 'If thou eat not of this tree thou shalt live.' Besides, the license the Lord gives him to eat of every other tree in the garden, and so of the tree of life, imports this promise.

4. Man's accepting of the terms. This is left to be gathered from the proposal of it by the Lord to innocent man, who would refuse no terms that a bountiful God proposed. He objected not against the condition; he betook himself to the privilege of the covenant, eating of the other trees of the garden. Eve owns it, Gen. 3:3. 'Of the fruit of

the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.' And when they had eaten of this forbidden fruit, their consciences terrified them, ver. 8. 'Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.' No wonder that Moses with a running pen describes this transaction, which, as to its being the way of salvation then proposed, passed as a flying shadow. Thus this covenant appears from the text.

To confirm this, consider that the scripture speaks of two covenants, Gal. 4:24 the one of grace, and therefore the other of works. See also Hos. 6:7. 'They like men have transgressed the covenant.' The Hebrew bears, as Adam. It is the same word that occurs, Job 31:33. 'If I have covered my transgressions as Adam. This will further appear while we shew,

II. The nature of this covenant. Wherein consider,

First, The parties covenanting. On the one hand was God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, man Creator and Sovereign Lord, who is the great Lawgiver, and withal good, and communicative of his goodness to his creatures. On the other part was man, God's creature; Adam, representing all mankind, and covenanting with God, not only for himself, but for all his posterity, as the natural father of all, of whose one blood nations of men were to be made, Acts 17:26 and the appointed federal head; which is clear from the imputation of his sin to all, Gen. 2:17. 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' Compare Rom. 5:12. 'As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' There was no mediator in this covenant; nor was there need of any: for man was as yet the holy friend of God, and his service while he stood was acceptable to God, as being fully conformable to his own law, in which he could not but delight, as in his own image.

Secondly, The condition of that covenant was perfect obedience, which God required of Adam, Gal. 3:10, 12, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.—And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doth them shall live in them.' The tenor of this covenant was, 'Do this and live.' Where three things are to be considered.

1. The law, which was to be the rule of that obedience; which is twofold. (1.) The moral law, or the law of the ten commandments, as the apostle explains it, Gal. 3:10 forecited. It is true, Adam had not this law written on tables of stone, but it was written in his heart; the knowledge of it was concreated with him, so that he naturally knew it, being made upright; which he could not be without this, Eccl. 7:29. Yea, this law is in part written on man's heart after the fall, as appears from Rom. 2:15. Much more was it written on Adam's heart before the fall. This law is the perpetual rule of righteousness. (2.) There was the positive symbolical law, of not eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This law was revealed to Adam in the text, neither could he otherwise have known it; it being no part of the law of nature, but a thing in itself altogether indifferent, and depending merely on the will of God, who could have appointed otherwise. Only, as the natural or moral law obliged him to this, seeing it commands the creature to obey God's will in all things; so by this his respect to the moral law was manifested; for as in not eating he testified his supreme love and obedience to God, so in eating of it he rejected the sweet yoke of God, and took on that of the devil.

2. The nature of the obedience that was in the condition of this covenant. It behoved to be perfect.

(1.) In respect of the principle of it. So the law requires men to 'love the Lord with all the heart.' It required not only external obedience, refraining from the thing forbidden; but internal obedience, which behoved to proceed from a disposition of soul bent towards God, in which there was no blemish, and altogether free and unconstrained

without any reluctance from within. And this implies, that the glory of God behoved to be man's chief end in all his actions, without having the least squint look to any other as his chief end.

(2.) Perfect in parts extending to all the commands of God whatsoever that were given him, Gal. 3:10 with respect to his thoughts, words, and actions. He was to do nothing that God prohibited, and to omit nothing that he commanded. He was to fulfil all righteousness, and his obedience was to be as broad as the law. Every commandment, without the least exception as to one tittle, was to be obeyed to the fullest extent.

(3.) Perfect in degrees. He was to 'love the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind,' Matt. 22:37. Every act of obedience behoved to be perfect in degrees, wanting nothing of that perfection which the law required. Every action performed by him behoved to be screwed up to the pitch determined in the law, without falling short of it in the least punctilio. All that was lower than that height required, was to be rejected as sinful; and the least flaw spoiled the whole.

(4.) Perfect in duration or continuance, without interruption, while God should have kept him in the state of trial, Gal. 3:10. This state could not have been for ever, without rendering the promise of life fruitless; for to make a promise necessarily implies that a time is set for obtaining the reward promised to the obedience; and if Adam was to continue in a perpetual state of trial, he could never have obtained the reward of his obedience. The time of this probation is not mentioned in the Bible. Probably it was not to be very long. And perhaps the devil, knowing the benignity and goodness of the Creator to his upright creature man, that he would not keep him long in a state liable to mutability, was incited to attack him so very early as on the day of his creation, in order to prevent his confirmation in an upright estate.

This and no less was the condition of that covenant. On no other terms could he attain to eternal happiness by it, or be justified in respect of his state before the Lord, though he might in respect of particular actions.

Hence it appears, that sincere obedience could not have been accepted, if it was not altogether perfect; nothing could be accepted, but an obedience altogether without fault or blemish; and that there was no place for repentance under this covenant; no sorrow for transgressing in the least instance could be admitted: for the threatening was peremptory, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' Such a positive denunciation cut off all hope, and rendered repentance of no avail.

3. Adam's power to perform the obedience required. He was able to answer all the demands of that covenant, being made upright, Eccl. 7:29 and in the image of God. There was light in his understanding, sanctity in his will, and rectitude in his affections; there was such an harmony among all his faculties, that his members yielded to his affections, his affections to his will, his will obeyed his reason, and his reason was subject to the law of God. Had he not then sufficient knowledge of his duty? and was he not invested with full power to perform the obedience required of him? Besides, it was not consistent with the justice and goodness of God to have required that of his creature, which he had not given him power to perform. The case is quite otherwise with respect to us in our lapsed state, for we have lost the power of yielding obedience to God's law in Adam. But let it be remembered, that though we are utterly unable to obey, yet God has not lost his right to demand obedience; which should induce us to betake ourselves to the second covenant, where every thing is freely given, and the will accepted for the deed.

Thirdly, The promise of the covenant was life, and therefore it is called the covenant of life. Now, a threefold life was promised.

1. Natural life, consisting in the union of the soul with the body, which should have been continued without death, if Adam had not sinned, Gen. 3:19. Though man's body was made of dust, yet, by virtue of the covenant-promise, it would have been secured from mingling with its original materials. As it was created without any principle of death, so it was not susceptible of any hazard from that quarter, as long as the covenant should be observed. His natural life would have remained in constant vigour, without languishing or decay: And he would have enjoyed the comfort of this life pure and unmixed without any of those evils, miseries and inconveniencies, which now overspread the world.

2. Spiritual life, consisting in the union of the soul with God. Man's soul was, and is in its own nature, immaterial and immortal, not liable to dissolution. It was endued with spiritual life at its creation, living in union and communion with God, and adorned with his image, consisting in righteousness and holiness. This image of God would have been continued in him. His knowledge of God and his duty would not have failed; nor would the righteousness of his will, or the purity and regularity of his affections have decayed. He would still have been the friend of God, and the favourite of heaven; and would never have been without the most lively marks of the love and friendship of his covenant God. He would have had ready access to God, without any eclipse of the divine favour; and the utmost pleasure and satisfaction in doing his duty, which would have been a continual feast to him.

3. Eternal life, or the glorious happiness of heaven. He should have been confirmed in his holy and happy estate beyond the hazard or possibility of sinning, or forfeiting it.—Though he was created mutable, and mutability is woven into the very nature of the creature, yet having finished the time allotted for his probation, he would have been secured from actual liableness to change for ever. His body would have been absolutely and for ever secured against hazard of death, or hurt from external accidents or injuries. He would have been confirmed in the love and favour of God for ever,

without any hazard of falling out of it. The sun of favour from God would have shone upon him, without ever setting. And after the time of his trial was over, he would have been transported, soul and body, into the heavenly paradise, there to abide for ever. He would not have always lived in the earthly paradise, where he was to eat, drink, and sleep, but have been carried to the celestial paradise, where the happy inhabitants live as the angels of God. This is plain, if he consider that application of the covenant of works, Matth. 19:16, 17. —'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.' Here Christ holds forth eternal life as the promise of this covenant, to be had on the performance of the condition. The weakness of the law to give eternal life now, ariseth only from the flesh, that is, the corruption of nature, whereby we are unable to fulfil the condition of it, Rom. 8:3. 'It was eternal life that Christ purchased for his people, and that as he was made under the law, by which he obtained that very life to them, which otherwise they should have had, if man had not sinned, Rom. 8:3, 4. Gal. 4:4, 5. Besides, eternal death was threatened; and the goodness of God uses not to propose greater punishments than rewards. And if it had not been so, man had nothing to expect more than he had when created, and set down in paradise.

Fourthly, The penalty of this covenant, in case of disobedience, was death; natural, consisting in the separation of the body from the soul; spiritual, in the separation of the soul from God, a death in trespasses and sins, Eph. 2:1; and eternal, in the separation of both body and soul from God for ever in hell, Matt. 25:41. Man's body had never died had he not sinned, for 'the wages of sin is death,' Rom. 6 ult. and far less his soul, which would have flourished in all the beauty of spiritual verdure and vigour for ever. But it may be asked, How was the threatening accomplished, when Adam lived so long after his fatal transgression? I answer, That day that he sinned he died spiritually. His soul was divested of the image of God that was stamped upon it at its creation; his understanding became dark, his will rebellious, and his affections impure and irregular. He lost the favour of his Maker, and he was exposed to the wrath of God, as a mark at which the arrows of the divine displeasure were to be

levelled. That this spiritual death was inflicted upon man immediately after his foul transgression, is evident from those gripes and throws of conscience that seized him, which made him hide himself from God amidst the trees of the garden. And this of course would have actually terminated in eternal death in hell, had not a Mediator been provided, who found man bound with these cords of death as a malefactor bound to the execution. And as for his natural life, that day he sinned, he got his death's wounds, of which he afterwards died; that day he became mortal, and his body liable to sickness, disease, pain, and every other harbinger of death. The crown of immortality, which he held of his Creator, by virtue of the covenant made with him, fell from off his head, and he became a subject of the king of terrors. He became liable to all those cords wherewith death binds his prisoners. So that he was as sure a dead man as if dead already, though the execution of the sentence was delayed, because of his posterity which were in his loins, and because another covenant was prepared, by which the life and happiness forfeited by the breach of the first covenant, was to be recovered, and that with great advantage.

Fifthly, We may consider how the covenant of works was confirmed. It hath pleased God to append seals to his covenants with men; and this covenant seems not to have wanted some things intended sacramentally to confirm it. Among which may be reckoned,

1. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Gen. 2:17. What sort of a tree it was, the scripture does not determine. But whatever it was, it was not so called, as having any virtue or power to make men wise; that was the devil's divinity, Gen. 3:5 who told Eve, that if they eat of it, they should be as gods; but he was a liar from the beginning, John 8:44.: but it was called so, because by it they knew to their fatal experience the happy state they fell from, and the woful misery that fall plunged them into. It obtained that name, because it was a warning-sign to them to beware of the experimental knowledge of evil, as they knew good. They had special acquaintance with good in all its charming kinds; and this tree was set before them as a beacon

to warn them from looking after the knowledge of evil, which, like a dangerous rock, would dash them to pieces, if they split upon it. And it served to confirm the covenant, and the happiness of their primitive state; inasmuch as in the threatening relative to this tree was included a promise, that as long as they kept from eating of its prohibited fruit, they should never die. And hence we may gather, which is no improbable opinion, that our first parents could fall by no other transgression than eating of this tree. And the devil that finished master of craft and subtility, attacked them in this quarter, as the only side on which he could promise himself success. And alas for poor man! Satan's stratagem succeeded, to the ruin of the whole human race.

2. The tree of life, Gen. 2:9. Though we have ground to think that this tree might be an excellent means of preserving the vigour of bodily life, as other trees in the garden also were, yet it could have no virtue in itself of making man every way immortal. But it seems to have been called the tree of life by reason of its signification being appointed of God as a sacrament, by eating whereof he should have been confirmed in the belief of the promise of life natural being continued, of spiritual life perpetuated, and eternal life to be enjoyed in heaven; which was the main thing, and included the other two, Gen. 3:22. 'And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever,' he must be driven out; denoting, that man, by sin, having lost his right to eternal life signified by this tree, was driven out, Rev. 2:7 that he might not profane the sacrament of it, to which he had now no more right. The words do not mean, that if Adam had eaten of the tree of life after his fall, he should retrieve his forfeited life; this being impossible, because the threatening was express, In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die; and that the tree of life had no such virtue and efficacy in itself, and ceased to be a sacrament of the covenant of works the moment man sinned. It was intended to assure and persuade him of life upon performing the condition; but the covenant being broken that assurance and persuasion actually fell of course. The whole verse may be read thus, Behold the man who was

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, that he may live for ever. Where three things are very plain. (2.) There is no irony or scoff here, as if God should say, Behold the man has attempted to become like one of us, to know good and evil; but how shamefully has he failed of his design! but, on the contrary, a most pathetic lamentation over fallen man. This sentence is evidently broken off abruptly, the words, I will drive him out, being suppressed; even as in the case of a father, who, with sighs and sobs, puts his offending child out of doors. (2.) It was God's design to prevent Adam's eating of the tree of life, as he had eaten of the forbidden tree; thereby mercifully taking care, that our fallen father, who had now got a revelation of the covenant of grace, might not, according to the corrupt natural inclination of men since the fall, run back to the covenant of works for life and salvation, by partaking of the tree of life, a sacrament of that covenant, and so reject the covenant of grace, by the eating of that tree now, as he had before broken the covenant of works, by the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (3.) At this time Adam imagined, that by the eating of the tree of life he might recover his forfeited life, and so live for ever.

III. I come now to shew why God entered into this covenant with man. I know no reason can be given for this, but what must be resolved into the glory of the grace and goodness of God. It was certainly an act of grace and admirable condescension in God, to enter into a covenant with his own creature. Man was not at his own but God's disposal; nor had he any thing to work with but what he had from God; so that there was no proportion betwixt the work enjoined and the reward promised. Man before that covenant was bound, but God was free: for man was under the law of nature before he was under the covenant; for the law was created with him, that is, he was no sooner a rational creature than he was under the law; but this covenant was not made with him till after he was brought into the garden to dress it. Before that covenant God was free to dispose of man as he saw fit, however perfectly he kept the law; but when in the covenant he made the promise of conferring life upon Adam in

case of continued obedience, during the time set for his trial, then he was debtor to his own faithfulness, which is necessarily engaged to perform whatever he hath promised. Again, death was the natural wages of sin, though there had been no covenant, and that by the rule of justice, which plainly requires that man should be dealt with as he has done. But man having given consent, however tacit, and not expressed in so many words, which yet is equivalent to a formal consent to the covenant, implying the threatening, the Lord proceeds not by simple justice, but by express formal covenant, in punishing for the breach of it. But we may consider the reason of God the Almighty Creator and Lawgiver's entering into a covenant with man a little more particularly, and that to the end our hearts may be impressed with a just sense of the glorious perfections of the great God, and the great goodness shewn to man in that whole transaction. I say, then, that God was pleased to deal with man by way of covenant, for two very important ends, the manifestation of his own glory, and man's greater good.

1. For his own glory, which is the supreme end of all his actions. More particularly,

- (1.) To display the lustre of his manifold or variegated wisdom, Eph. 3:10. This way of dealing was the most effectual method for securing man's obedience: for the covenant being a mutual engagement between God and his creature, as it gave him infallible assurance to strengthen his faith, so it was the sweetest bond to preserve his felicity. Divine wisdom shines clearly, in suiting the method of dealing to the nature of the reasonable creature, which was to be led with its own consent. It is true the precept alone is binding upon man by virtue of the authority of the imposer; but man's own consent increases the obligation, twisting the cords of the law and binding them more strongly to obedience. Thus Adam was God's servant by the condition of his nature, and also by his own choice, accepting the covenant, from which he could not recede, without the guilt and infamy of the worst perfidy. The terms of the covenant were such as became the parties concerned, God and man: it established an

inseparable connection between duty and happiness; as is plain from the sanction, In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

(2.) To shew his wonderful moderation. For though he be Sovereign Monarch of the world, and has absolute power over all creatures to dispose of them as he pleases; yet, in covenanting with man, he sweetly tempered his supremacy and sovereign power, seeking as it were to reign with man's consent. And when, by virtue of his sovereign authority and absolute right, he might have enjoined harder terms to man, and those too altogether just and righteous, he chose to use so much moderation, that he would require nothing of man, but that which man himself should judge, and behaved in reason to be a just and easy yoke; and which, in accepting the terms, he acknowledged to be such.

(3.) For the praise of the glory of his grace. It was free condescension on God's part to make such a promise to man's obedience. He might have required obedience from him by virtue of his sovereignty, as his Lord and Maker, without binding himself by any promise to reward his service. All that he was capable to do was but mere duty to his Creator; and when he had done all that was commanded him, it was no more than what he was bound to do as God's creature. It was simply impossible for man to merit any thing at God's hand. It must be owned, there was much grace in this transaction, in that God entered into terms of agreement with man, not his equal, but his own creature, and the work of his hands; and in promising him a reward for his service, which was due to God by the law of creation previous to that federal deed, and so great a reward, even eternal life, between which and the work there was no proportion.

(4.) For venting his boundless love in the communications of his goodness to man. For God did not create man or angels because he needed them, but that there might be proper objects for receiving the displays of his goodness. Nor did he enter into a covenant with man from any natural necessity, but on design of communicating his bounty to him, Deut. 7:7, 8. Ezek. 16:8. Though the Lord might have

exacted all that obedience and service from man, which possibly he could yield, and reduced him into his first nothing by annihilation at last, or at least not have bestowed everlasting happiness upon him, not bound himself by covenant whereby he might expect it; yet, to shew the greatness of his goodness and love, he chose a way to reward that service in a most bountiful manner, which otherwise was due to him.

(5.) For the manifestation of his truth and faithfulness in keeping covenant with his creature, which could not otherwise have been so gloriously discovered. God had made illustrious displays of his wisdom, power, and goodness, in the creation of all things, and in that excellent piece of workmanship, man, the chief of his works in this world; hat his faithfulness and veracity could not have been known, at least in its effects, without some such transaction.

(6.) That he might be the more cleared and justified in resenting the injuries done him by the disobedience of his creature, with whom he had condescended to deal so graciously. For the more condescension and goodness there is on God's part, the greater ingratitude appears on man's part in trampling on the divine goodness. But,

2. God condescended to enter into covenant with man for man's greater good.

(1.) That thereby he might put the higher honour upon him. It was indeed a very distinguishing respect put upon man to be an ally of heaven, and the confederate friend of God. If it be an honour for a mean country peasant to be joined in a formal bond of friendship with a prince or potentate on earth, how much greater honour and dignity was it unto man to be joined in a bond of love and friendship with God, the Supreme Monarch of the whole world?

(2.) To bind him the faster to his duty. The Lord knew man's mutable state, and how slippery and inconstant the heart of man is, where confirming grace is not vouchsafed; therefore, to prevent this

inconstancy incident to man, a finite creature, and to establish him in his obedience, he laid him under a covenant-obligation to his service. Man was bound to obey God by virtue of his creation; but his making a covenant with man which he willingly consented to, was a superadded tie to bind him the faster to his duty. By the covenant that was made with Adam, he had a kind of help to make him the more careful to observe the law which was written on his heart, and a prop to make him stand the more fixed and steady. For, on the one hand, he was warned of his danger in case of disobedience, that so he might beware of offending God; and, on the other he was encouraged to serve his Maker with the greater alacrity, from the greatness of the reward set before him, and the greatness of the punishment threatened in case he should disobey: both which tended notably to incline him to constancy in his duty.

(3.) That his obedience might be more cheerful, being that unto which he had willingly tied himself. God chose to rule man by his own consent, rather than by force. An absolute law might have extorted obedience from man, but a covenant made it appear more free and willing. It made man's obedience look as if it were the result of his own choice, rather than of any obligation lying upon him. This tended much to the honour of God; for one volunteer that goeth to the war, doth honour the service more than ten soldiers pressed by force.

(4.) For his greater comfort and encouragement. By this he might clearly see what he might expect from God as a reward of his diligence and activity in his service.

(5.) That he might manifest himself to him, and deal with him the more familiarly. The dealing by way of covenant is the way of dealing betwixt man and man that hath least of distance in it, and most of familiarity, wherein parties come near to each other with greatest freedom. There is more nearness and familiarity in this than in any other way whereby God hath expressed his will. It is a more familiar way than that of commands and precepts, which imports nothing but

authority and sovereignty. Yea, it is more familiar than the way of absolute promises, which might indeed set forth God's abundant goodness, but not so much God's familiar condescension, as the way of a covenant, when so great and so glorious a Majesty stoops to treat and deal by reciprocal engagements with so mean a creature as man, who is sprung of dust.

I come now to make some practical improvement of this subject.

1. See here the great and wonderful condescension of God, who was pleased to stoop so low as to enter into a covenant with his own creature. Though he is infinitely great and glorious in himself, the fountain of his own blessedness, the glass of his own beauty, and the throne of his own glory; yet he condescended to treat with mean man in a way of covenant. How astonishing is it that God should make a covenant with dust and ashes; and that he should bind himself to man, to give him life and happiness as the reward of his obedience, which he owed to God by the law of his creation?

2. See what a glorious condition man was in when God entered into a covenant with him. He was placed in a pleasant and delightful place, where he was furnished with every conveniency he could desire. He was conformed to God in holiness. Light sparkled in his understanding, sanctity shined in his will, and his affections were regular and pure. He had familiar intimacy and communion with his Maker, and conversed as freely with him as a favourite with his prince. As he enjoyed the light of the sun in paradise to cherish and refresh his body, so he had the light of God's countenance to solace and delight his soul. Thus happy was man: but, ah! he is now fallen like a star from heaven.

3. See that God is very just in all that comes on man. He set him up with a good stock, in a noble case, making him his covenant-party. He gave him the noblest undeserved encouragement to continue in his obedience, and told him his hazard if he should disobey. So that

falling he is left without excuse, his misery being entirely owing to himself.

4. See the deplorable condition of all Adam's posterity by reason of the breach of this covenant. They are under the curse of the law, which is an universal curse, and discharges its thunder against every person who is naturally under that covenant, and has not changed his state.

5. This serves to humble all flesh, and beat down the pride of all created glory, under the serious consideration of the great loss we have sustained by Adam's fall, and the sad effects thereof upon us. We have lost all that is good and valuable, the image and favour of God, and have incurred the wrath and displeasure of a holy God.

6. See the unsearchable riches of divine grace, in providing a better covenant for the recovery and salvation of fallen man. The duty of the first covenant is now impossible, and the penalty of it intolerable. It admits of no repentance, nor accepts of any short endeavours; but leaves sinful man as a malefactor in the hands of the law. Blessed be God for the revelation of the covenant of grace, wherein life and salvation is freely provided and offered to fallen man through the obedience and satisfaction of the second Adam. Well may it be called a covenant of grace: for it came from the rich and free grace of God, as its true spring; it is all bespangled with gracious promises, as the heavens are with stars; and all the blessings contained in it are gratuitous and free, such as men cannot plead any right or title unto by any merit or works of their own. When the angels sinned, God expelled them from heaven, and left them to perish in their misery; but he was graciously pleased to enter into a covenant with his Son, as second Adam, for the recovery of fallen man, who by his obedience and death hath fulfilled the law, and suffered the penalty thereof, and thereby made ample provision for all the wants and miseries of poor sinners.

7. There is no wonder, that however little good is wrought in the world, yet working to win heaven is so frequent. We have sufficient evidence of the covenant of works being made with man as a public person, seeing it is yet natural to us to do that we may live, and to think that God will accept us for our works' sake.

8. See your misery, all ye that are out of Christ. This covenant is your way to heaven, which is now impossible. Tell not of your good meanings and desires, your repentance, and your obedience, such as it is; and think not to get life, salvation, and acceptance thereby. For the covenant ye are under admits of no repentance, no will for the deed. It requires nothing less than perfect obedience, which ye are incapable to give.

9. Lastly, Therefore give over this way of seeking life by the broken covenant of works, and come to the Lord Jesus Christ; lay hold on the better covenant, and come up to Christ's chariot, Cant. 3:9, 10 which will drive you safely to eternal life and glory. That chariot which the first Adam drove, went not far till it was all shattered, and made unfit to carry any to heaven. It breaks with the weight of the least sin; and so ye can never think it will drive to heaven with you, Rom. 8. But come into the chariot of the covenant of grace, and ye will be safely carried in it to the land of eternal rest and glory*.

OF THE FALL OF OUR FIRST PARENTS

GEN. 3:6, 7.—And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked: and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

GOD made man upright, but he sought out many inventions. Man being in honour, abode not. He soon fell from the happy and holy state in which he was created.

In the text we have three things to be considered.

1. The fall of our first parents from their state of primitive integrity; it was by their both eating of the forbidden fruit, and consequently sinning against God, ver. 6. And they were immediately sensible that they were fallen from that holy and happy state, ver. 7. This appears two ways. (1.) By their knowledge of their nakedness. Some suppose, that their bodies, before their fall, had a divine glory and lustre on them, which was immediately taken away when they sinned, and they saw that this beautiful covering was now gone. Most part of interpreters understand it of their seeing their nakedness with grief and shame, from a sense of their guilt contracted, and of that sinful concupiscence they found now working in them. Thus the eyes of their minds were opened, which Satan had blinded before. (2.) By their going about to cover their bodies with the broad leaves of the fig-tree. All this clearly holds forth their sense, though it was no holy sense, of their shameful fall.

2. That action by which they fell, their sinning against God, ver. 6 viz. by eating the forbidden fruit. They broke God's express command,

forbidding them, under pain of death, to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And immediately after this wicked deed they saw they were naked.

3. How they fell. They fell of their own free-will being left to their freedom, ver. 6. The woman saw that the tree was good for food, &c. There was no force or compulsion here; all proceeded from free choice. Their eyes saw the fruit, their hearts coveted it, their hands took it, and their mouths ate it.

The doctrinal truth deducible from the text is,

DOCT. 'Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created by sinning against God.'

Two things are here to be considered.

I. The fall of our first parents.

II. How or what way they fell.

I. Let us consider the fall of our first parents. And here I will shew,

1. That man is fallen.
2. Whereby he fell, or what cast him down.
3. What he fell from.

First, I am to shew that man is fallen, and that our first parents did not continue in the estate wherein they were created, but fell from it. This is clear,

1. From the express narrative of this fatal event given by Moses, Gen. 3 from which it appears, that the devil entering into a serpent, artfully tempted Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit, in direct opposition to the express command of God, prohibiting it under a dreadful

penalty; that she prevailed upon Adam to follow her example; that they were both immediately stung with remorse and horror for what they had done; and perceiving themselves to be naked, they fell a-sewing fig-leaves together for a covering to their bodies; that hearing the voice of the Lord God in the garden, they did, as an evidence of their guilt, and of the privation of light in their minds, hide themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden; that being called to account for their conduct, the woman threw the blame on the serpent, and the man on the woman; and that both received sentence from their offended Creator and Judge, expressive of their future misery; though at the same time God was pleased to give them a revelation of the method of salvation by a Redeemer, in the promise respecting the seed of the woman braising the serpent's head. All this amounts to a plain proof that man has fallen from the holy and happy state he was placed in at his creation.

2. From the doleful experience of their posterity, Rom. 5:12. 'As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all man, for that all have sinned.' When we see the whole race of mankind born beggars, surely we may conclude that their father became bankrupt; for he once had a happy portion to transmit to his posterity, which he foolishly squandered away. And the misery attending upon us now, is, that we are pursued for our father's debt as well as our own, without having a farthing to pay.

Secondly, We may inquire, How did Adam fall, or what cast him down? It was his sinning against God. While our first parents held with God, they stood; but when they departed from him, they fell. What their sin was more particularly, will fall to be shewn afterwards. They thought to rise by their sin, affecting to be as gods, Gen. 3:5, 6 but it was their ruin. Seeking more they lost what they had.

Thirdly, It may be asked, What did they fall from? The state wherein they were created. Now, this was a state of the greatest holiness and felicity. When they sinned,

1. They fell from a holy into a sinful state. They lost the image of God. Observe the opposition betwixt the image of God and that of Adam, Gen. 5:1, 3. There we are told, 'that God made man in his own likeness,' or image; and that Adam beget a son 'in his own likeness,' even Seth, from whom the whole human race is sprung. Sin was a turning from God as their chief end, and making themselves their chief end; whereby all their uprightness behoved to be lost. It broke the whole law of God at one touch, and violently struck against God and man's neighbour, that is, his posterity; and so could not but waste and defile the conscience. This was the sense of the threatening, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' And in this unholy state are all born of the first man.

(1.) They lost their knowledge, and fell under horrible blindness. Witness their fig-leaf cover for shrouding their nakedness, and their hiding themselves from the presence of the Lord, Gen. 3:7, 8. A plain indication of their falling into dreadful ignorance of the Divine Being, the opposite of that great knowledge they had of him in their primitive state of integrity.

(2.) They lost the righteousness of their will, Eccl. 7:29. And they fell under an aversion to God. Witness their running away from him, ver. 8 their excusing their sin, transferring the guilt every one off themselves, till it landed at length on God himself, ver. 12.

(3.) They lost the holiness of their affections, which immediately fell into confusion and disorder. Witness their covering their nakedness. While they were innocent, though naked, they were not ashamed; but that jewel being gone, the irregularity of their affections began to appear in discovering themselves to be naked, by the evil operation of concupiscence in their minds.

2. They fell from their happy state into a miserable one. O what a fearful overturn was made by their sin.

(1.) Horror of conscience seizes them, ver. 8 appearing in flying from the divine presence; which nothing but guilt, clasping as a serpent about them, could have induced them to do. Death was threatened in case of transgression, Gen. 2:17. They both died spiritually, and were bound with the cords of temporal and eternal death.

(2.) They are driven out of paradise, excommunicated and declared incapable of communion with God in the tree of life in the garden, Gen. 3:23. 'The Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden,' as a divorced woman out of the house of her husband, as the word signifies. Nay, God drove out the man, expelling him from that pleasant and delightful place, which he had forfeited by his transgression, ver. 24.

(3.) The woman, the first transgressor, is condemned to sorrow and pain in breeding, bearing, and bringing forth children, ver. 16 which, as some observe, is greater in women than other creatures. And frequently women lose their lives in the case.

(4.) She is put under a yoke of subjection to her husband, ver. 16. Not but that the woman was subject to him before, but it was to a gentle and loving guide: but now all her desires are subjected to her husband, to grant them or deny them as he sees fit, because she ate of the forbidden fruit without asking his advice, which now, because of his and her corruption, becomes a heavy yoke.

(5.) The ground is cursed for man's sake; under the influence of which curse it is barren of wholesome fruits, which it does not yield without heavy labour and diligent cultivation, but fruitful in noxious plants, as thorns and thistles, ver. 17.

(6.) Man is condemned to singular anxiety, to weary, toilsome, and oftentimes fruitless labour, whether it be the labour of the hands or of the mind, ver. 17, 19.; for this last is to be taken into the account too, as appears from Eccl. 1:13, 18. 'I gave my heart (says the preacher), to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done

under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.'

II. Let us next consider, how or what way upright man fell. It was so that our first parents sinned, being left to the freedom of their own will. For understanding of this let us consider the following things.

1. That our first parents had a freedom of will. Freedom of will is a liberty in the will, whereby of its own accord, freely and spontaneously, without any force upon it, it chuses or refuses what is proposed to it by the understanding. And this freedom of will man hath in whatever state he be. But there is a great difference of the freedom of the will in the different states of man. In the natural corrupt state, man has a free will only to evil, Gen. 6:5. 'Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.' Eph. 2:1. 'He is dead in trespasses and sins.' He freely chuseth evil without any force on his will; and he cannot do otherwise, being under the bondage of sin. In the state of grace, man has a free will, partly to good and partly to evil. Hence the apostle says, Rom. 7:22, 24. 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But 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.' In this state the will sometimes chuses that which is good, and sometimes that which is evil. This freedom of will is in all regenerate persons who have in some measure recovered the image of God. They chuse good freely by virtue of a principle of grace wrought in them by the sanctifying operations of the Divine Spirit; yet through the remainders of corruption that abides in them, their wills are sometimes inclined to that which is evil. In the state of glory, man has a free will to good only. In this state the blessed chuse good freely; and being confirmed in a holy state, they cannot sin.

The freedom of will that man had in the state of innocence was different from all these. In that state he had a freedom of will both to good and evil; and so had a power wholly to chuse good, or wholly to

chuse evil: which differences it from the freedom of will in the state of grace. He had a free will to good, yea, the natural set of his will was to good only, Eccl. 7:29 being 'made upright;' but it was liable to change through the power of temptation, and so free to evil also, as mournful experience has evidenced. Man was created holy and righteous, and received a power from God constantly to persevere in goodness, if he would? yet the act of perseverance was left to the choice and liberty of his own will. To illustrate this a little, we may observe some resemblance of it in nature. God creates the eye, says one, and puts into it the faculty of seeing, and withal he adds to the eye necessary helps by the light of the sun. As for the act of seeing, it is left to man's liberty; for he may see if he will, and if he will he may shut his eyes. The physician, again, by his art procures an appetite, and provides convenient food for the patient: but the act of eating is in the pleasure of the patient; for he may eat, or abstain from it if he will. Thus God gave Adam strength and power to persevere in righteousness, but the will he left to himself.

Let no man quarrel, that God made Adam liable to change in his goodness; for if he had been unchangeably holy, he behoved to be so either by nature or by free grace; if by nature, that were to make him God; if of free grace, then there was no wrong done him in withholding what was not due. And he would have got the grace of confirmation, if he had stood the time of his trial.

Secondly, God left our first parents to the freedom of their own will; and was in no respect the cause of their falling.

1. The Lord did not withdraw any of that strength and ability which he had bestowed upon them in their creation. There was no subtraction of any grace that was requisite for their standing. God is not like man to give and recal again; for his gifts are without repentance. Adam left God before he was forsaken by him.

2. The Lord did not infuse any vicious inclinations into man. There was no internal impulsions from God, exciting him to eat the

forbidden fruit. He neither moved him to sin, nor approved of it, but forbade it under the severest penalty. It is altogether inconsistent with the divine purity to incline the creature to sin. As God cannot be tempted to evil, neither tempteth he any man. It is extremely injurious to his infinite wisdom to think, that he would deface and spoil that admirable work which he had composed with so much design and counsel. And it is highly dishonourable to his immense goodness. He loved his creature, the master piece of his works; and love is an inclination to do good. It was impossible therefore, that God should induce man to sin, or withdraw that power from him which was necessary to resist the temptation, when the consequence must be his inevitable ruin.

But by their being left to the freedom of their own will, we are to understand God's with-holding of that further grace (which he was nowise bound to give them) that would have infallibly prevented their falling into sin. God only permitted this fall. No doubt he could have hindered either Satan to tempt, or man to have yielded; but in his holy wise providence, without which a sparrow cannot fall, far less all mankind, he permitted Satan to tempt, that is, he did not hinder him, which he was not obliged to do. It was in man's power to continue in his obedience or not. God was not obliged to hinder his fall. As he brings light out of darkness, order out of confusion and life out of death, so he knew how to bring good out of evil, and glory to himself out of man's fall. Adam's fall was perfectly voluntary; his own will was the sole cause of it, as will plainly appear, if you consider.

(1.) That while he continued innocent, he had a sufficient power to persevere in his holy state. God created him with a perfection of grace. If he had pleased, he might have effectually resisted the temptation and continued stedfast in his duty to God; and God was under no obligation to give him that further actual grace which would have effectually kept him up. And this grace he was bound neither to give nor continue with him.

(2.) That the devil did only allure, he could not ravish his consent. Though his malice be infinite, yet his power is restrained and limited by the omnipotent hand of Jehovah, that he cannot fasten an immediate, much less an irresistible, impression on the will. He therefore made use of an external object to invite man to sin. Now, objects have no constraining force: they are but partial agents, and derive all their efficacy from the faculty unto which they are agreeable. And although now, in our fallen state, sin hath so disordered the flesh, that there is great difficulty in resisting those objects that pleasantly insinuate themselves; yet, in the state of innocence, there was such an universal rectitude in Adam, and so entire a subjection of the sensual appetite to the superior power of reason, that he might have obtained an easy conquest. A resolute negative had made him victorious; by a strong denial, he had baffled that proud spirit.

(3.) That Adam's disobedience was the effect of his own choice. For a specious object was conveyed through the unguarded sense to his fancy, and from that to his understanding, which, by a vicious careless neglecting to consider the danger, commended it to the will, and that resolved to embrace it. Now, it is plain and undeniable, that the action which resulted from the direction of the mind, and the choice of the will, was absolutely free. Besides, as the regret that is mixed with an action is a certain character that the person is under restraint; so the delight that attends it is a clear evidence that he is free. When the appetite is drawn by the lure of pleasure, the more violent, the more voluntary is its motion. Now, the representation of the forbidden fruit was under the notion of pleasure: The woman saw that the fruit was good for food, (that is, pleasurable to the palate), pleasant to the eye, and to be desired to make one wise, that is, to increase knowledge, which is the pleasure of the mind; and these allectives drew her into the snare. Man was under no necessity to sin. Force and co-action are inconsistent with the nature of the will, and entirely destroys it. Adam might have continued in his obedience if he had pleased. The devil had no power over him to disturb his felicity. He prevailed against him by simple suasion.

Thirdly, The devil tempted our first parents to sin. The devil in the serpent set on man while he stood. Where observe,

1. It was a true serpent which the devil appeared in. What sort of a serpent it was, is not determined: but it seems to have been a beautiful creature of a shining colour: for in Deut. 8:15 there are serpents spoken of that are in the Hebrew called Seraphim, the very name given to angels, which were wont to appear in a splendid form, it may be like these seraphim; and so Eve might take the serpent for one of these good angels. But Moses' plain historical narrative leaves no room to doubt that it was a real serpent, representing it to be more subtle than any beast of the field, and as cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field, after the transgression, when it was condemned to go upon its belly, and to eat dust all the days of its life, Gen. 3:1, 14. And it is known that the Egyptians, by the devil's instigation, worshipped serpents. And in the old Greek mysteries they used to carry about a serpent, and cry Evah: A sign of the extraordinary service it had done to the devil.

2. Though Moses makes no mention of the devil in this affair, yet surely he was the prime instrument in this fatal seduction. For seeing serpents cannot speak, and far less reason, we may easily conclude it was the devil, who therefore is called 'the old serpent, and a liar and murderer from the beginning,' John 8:44. See Gen. 3:15. Compare Heb. 2:14. The devil then, one, perhaps the chief, of those rebellious spirits, who by a furious ambition had raised a war in heaven, and were fallen from their obedience and glorious state, designing to corrupt man, and make him a companion with them in their revolt, set about this work, urged by two strong and powerful passions, hatred and envy.

(1.) The devil was prompted to this action by an implacable hatred against God. For being fallen under a final and irrevocable doom, he looked upon God as an irreconcilable enemy; and not being able to injure his essence, he struck at his image; as the fury of some beast discharges itself at the picture of a man. He singled out Adam as the

mark of his malice, that, by seducing him from his duty, he might defeat God's design, which was to be honoured by man's free and cheerful obedience; and so to eclipse the lustre of his excellencies as though he had made man in vain.

(2.) He was solicited by envy, the first native of hell. For having lost the friendship and favour of God, and being cast out of heaven, the happy region of blessedness and joy, the sight of Adam's felicity highly exasperated and accented his grief, that man, who by the condition of his nature was inferior to him, should be prince of the world, and the special friend and favourite of heaven, whilst he himself was a miserable prisoner, under those fatal chains which restrained and tormented him, the power and the wrath of God. This made his state and condition more intolerable. His torment was incapable of any allay, but by rendering man as miserable as himself. And as hatred excited his envy, so envy inflamed his hatred, and both joined together in mischief. And being thus pushed on, his subtilty being equal to his malice, he contrives a temptation which might be most taking and dangerous to man in his raised and happy state. As soon as Adam was invested with all his glory, the devil, as it were, would dethrone him on the day of his coronation, and bring both him and all his posterity under a curse. Here I shall consider the temptation which was the occasion of man's fall, and the devil's subtilty in managing it.

1. As to the temptation itself, it was very suitable and promising. The devil attempted to seduce him by art, in his propounding the lure of knowledge and pleasure, to inveigle the spiritual and sensitive appetites at once. There were three things in which the desirableness of this fruit was represented, which sets forth the great art and sagacity of Satan.

(1.) Its agreeableness to the palate. It is said, The woman saw the fruit that it was good for food. Satan told her that it was of a most sweet and delicious taste, and would highly gratify her sensual appetite.

(2.) It was pleasant to the eye; a charming and beautiful fruit, which had an inviting aspect.

(3.) There was a desirableness in it to the rational appetite. It was a tree to be desired to make one wise. And the serpent told her, ver. 5 that, upon eating it, their eyes should be opened, and they should be as gods, knowing good and evil. He made Eve believe, that, upon her eating the fruit of that tree, she would be raised and elevated from the human to a kind of divine nature and condition. This was the temptation with which the devil assaulted our first parents in paradise, and prevailed against them.

2. I shall take notice of Satan's subtilty in managing this temptation. We read of his wiles in scripture; and indeed they are worse than his darts.

(1.) That he might the better succeed in his hellish design, he addressed himself to the woman, the weakest person, and most liable to seduction. He reckoned, and that justly enough, that his attempt would be most successful here, and that she was less able to resist him. He broke over the hedge where it was weakest. He knew very well that he could more easily insinuate and wind himself into her by a temptation. An old experienced soldier, when he is to storm and enter a castle, observes carefully where there is a breach, or how he may enter with most facility: so did Satan here when he assaulted Eve, the weaker vessel. And he tempted the woman first, because he knew, if once he could prevail with her, she would easily entice and draw on her husband. Satan knew very well, that a temptation coming to Adam from Eve, his wife, in this the infancy of their married state, would be more prevailing and less suspected. Sometimes near relations prove strong temptations. A wife may be a snare, when she dissuades her husband from his duty, or entices him to sin. It is said of Ahab, 1 Kings 21:25 that 'there was none like unto him, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.' She blew the coals, and made his sin flame out with the greater violence. Satan discovered

his great subtilty in tempting Adam by his wife; for he with complacency received the temptation, and, by the enticement of this old serpent, committed adultery with the creature, from whence the cursed race of sin and all miseries proceed.

(2.) He assaulted her when alone, in the absence of her husband, and so did the more easily prevail. For 'two are better than one;' and, as Solomon observes, 'a threefold cord is not easily broken.' Had Adam been present at this fatal congress, it is like the attempt had not been so easily successful.

(3.) The devil's subtilty may be seen here in hiding himself in the body of a serpent, which, before sin entered into the world was not terrible to Eve. Satan crept into a serpent, and spake in it, as the angel did afterwards in Balaam's ass. She was not afraid of this apparition; for she knew no guilt, and therefore was not subject to any fear. She might look upon this as one of the angels or blessed spirits, which, as they used after this to appear in the shape of men, why might not one of them appear now, and converse with her in the shape of a beautiful serpent; why might not she freely discourse with this, which she reckoned one of those good angels, to whose care and tuition both she and her husband were committed? For we may suppose the fall of the angels was not yet revealed to her, and she thought this to be a good spirit, otherwise she would certainly have declined all conversation with an apostate angel. Some have supposed, and that not very improbably, that more discourse passed between the serpent and Eve than is recorded, Gen. 3 and represent the matter thus: The serpent, catching the opportunity of the woman's being at a distance from her husband, makes his address to her with a short speech, saluting her as empress of the world, and giving her a great many encomiums and dignifying titles: She wonders, and inquires what this meant? and whether he was not a brute creature? and how he came to be endowed with understanding and speech? The serpent replies, that he was nobler than a brute, and did indeed once want both these gifts; but by eating a certain fruit in this garden, he had got both. She immediately asks what fruit and

tree that was which had such a surprising influence and virtue. Which when he had shewed her, she replied, This no doubt is an excellent fruit, but God hath strictly forbidden us the use of it. To which the serpent presently replies, as in the close of ver. 1. 'Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' The way how these words are introduced plainly shews that something had passed previous thereto. And some suppose, that the serpent, to confirm the truth of his assertion, pulled off some of the fruits of the tree, ate one in her presence, and presented another to Eve, who, before eating it, had the discourse with the serpent recorded in the subsequent verses.

(4.) The devil's subtilty appears in accosting our first parents so early, before they were confirmed in their course of obedience. The holy angels in heaven are fully confirmed in righteousness and holiness; they are called morning stars; Job 38:7 and are all fixed, not wandering stars. But our first parents were not confirmed in their obedience, they were not yet fixed in their orb of holiness. Though they had a possibility of standing, yet they had not an impossibility of falling. They were holy but mutable. It was possible for them to change their state. Now, Satan's subtilty was eminently manifested here.

(5.) He first allures with the hope of impunity, and then he promises an universal knowledge of good and evil.

(1.) He persuades Eve, that though she did eat of the forbidden tree, yet she should not die, ver. 4. 'Ye shall not surely die.' 'God indeed did say so for your terror, to keep you in awe. But do not entertain such hard and unworthy thoughts of that God who is infinitely good and gracious. Do not think that, for such a trifle as the eating of a little fruit, he will undo you and all your posterity for ever, and so suddenly destroy the most excellent piece of his own workmanship, wherein his image shines in a most resplendent manner.'

(2.) He promiseth them an universal knowledge, as the effect of eating this fruit, ver. 5. 'For God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened: and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' 'God's design in that prohibition is only this: He knows that you shall be so far from dying, that thereby you shall certainly be entered into a new and more noble and excellent kind of life. The eyes of your understanding, which are now shut in a great measure as to the knowledge of many things, shall then be wide opened, and ye shall see more clearly and distinctly than now you do. You shall be as God, and shall attain to a kind of omniscience.'

(6.) Satan's subtilty was manifested here, in assaulting Eve's faith. He would persuade her, that God had not spoken truth in that threatening. He managed the whole business with a lie; yea, he adds one lie to another. 'Ye shall not surely die,' says he; and then he represents God as envying our first parents that great honour and happiness that was attainable by them, ver. 5 and himself as one that wished their happiness, and would tell her how to arrive at it; and alleges they might easily understand, by the very name of the tree, the truth of what he says to her. 'It is (says he) because God envies your felicity that he hath forbidden you the use of this tree. But know ye, if ye eat of it, ye shall be as gods.' Here was subtilty indeed. The devil was first a liar, and then a murderer. This was Satan's masterpiece to weaken her faith; for when he had shaken that, and brought her once to distrust, then she was easily overcome: and presently put forth her hand to pluck the forbidden fruit. By these pretences he ruined innocence itself: for the woman being deceived by these allectives, swallowed down the poison of the serpent; and having tasted death herself, she betook herself to her husband, and persuaded him by the same means to despise the law of their Creator.

Thus sin made its entrance into the world, and brought an universal confusion into it. For the moral harmony of the world consisting in the just subordination of the several ranks of beings to one another, and of all to God, when man, who was placed next to him, broke the

union, his fall brought a desperate disorder into God's government. And though the matter of the offence may seem small, yet the disobedience was infinitely great; it being the transgression of that command which was given to be the real proof of man's subjection to God. The honour and majesty of the whole law was violated in the breach of that symbolical precept. But this will fall to be more fully illustrated in a subsequent discourse.

Fourthly, Man being thus left to the freedom of his own will, abused his liberty in complying with the temptation, and freely apostatised from God. And so man himself, and he only, was the true and proper cause of his own sinning. Not God, for he is unchangeably holy; not the devil, for he could only tempt, not force: therefore man himself only is to blame, Eccl. 7:29. 'God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.'

I shall conclude this subject with a few inferences.

1. Hence see the great weakness, yea the nothingness of the creature when left to itself. When Adam was in the state of integrity, he quickly made a defection from God, he soon lost the robe of his primitive innocence, and all the blessedness of paradise. If our nature was so weak when at the best, then how miserably weak is it now when it is at its worst? If Adam did not stand when he was perfectly holy and righteous, how unable are we to stand when sin has entirely disabled us? If purified nature could not resist the temptation, but was quite overturned at the first blast, how shall corrupt nature stand, when besieged and stormed with a long succession of strong and violent assaults? If Adam in a few hours sinned himself out of paradise, O how quickly would even those who are regenerated sin themselves into hell, if they were not preserved by a greater power than their own; nay 'kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation?' God left some of the angels to themselves, and they turned devils; and he left innocent Adam, and he fell into a gulf of misery. May we not then much more say, 'Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall;' especially seeing we have a

violent bent and strong propensity of heart and will to go away from God, which Adam had not.

2. There is no reason to blame God for the misery of the fall. He gave man sufficient power and ability to stand if he would, promised a large reward to excite his obedience, and severely threatened disobedience: but man would needs try experiments to make his case better than God made it; and so fell by his own inventions. The fault then was his own, he alone was culpable, and he was the author of his own ruin.

3. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. You see that you have to do with an impudent devil, who is still going about seeking whom he may devour. No state, while ye are in this world, can secure you from his temptations. Though ye be in a state of reconciliation and friendship with God, ye are not secure from his assaults. No place, though it were a paradise, can protect you. He has malice enough to push you on to the most atrocious sins; subtilty and experience, acquired by hellish art in the course of some thousand years, to suit his baits so as they may best take with you. Do not parley with the tempter: listening to him may bring on doubting, and doubting may bring on the denial of God's truths, and so end in full compliance with his horrid temptations, as it did with our first mother.

4. If Adam fell so soon after he was created, and could not be his own keeper, then certainly he can much less be his own saviour. If he could not preserve himself from falling into the gulf, much less can he pull himself out of it again. We are by nature without strength, and have no inclination to that which is good; and therefore God must work powerfully and efficaciously in us. We cannot break the chains and knock off the fetters of sin and Satan, by which we are held. We can make no reparation to the honour of God for the wrongs and indignities we have done him. To Christ alone we must be indebted for all this. We have destroyed ourselves, but in him is our help.

5. There is no justification by the works of the law. Adam broke the covenant of works, and so rendered it impracticable for him or his posterity to attain to life and happiness by it. For it is written, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,' Gal. 3:10. 'As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.' The law requires a perfect spotless righteousness, but the best righteousness of fallen man is but filthy rags. It is not only torn and ragged, but polluted and defiled. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God: and there is no possibility of obtaining justification by the works of the law now; 'for by the works of the law (says Paul) shall no flesh be justified.'

6. Lastly, See your absolute need of Christ; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby ye can be saved. Go not about to establish a righteousness of your own, or to seek to get to heaven by any works of your own. That is indeed still the thing man aims at. First he sins, and then, like Adam, sets to work to cover himself with a cover of his own making, to procure a title to eternal life by his own works. But is it easier to recover yourselves from the ruins of the fall, than to stand while yet in an innocent and upright state? Have ye gathered strength by sinning, and are ye able to walk to heaven on your own legs? Come then to Christ, who by his obedience and death hath procured a righteousness which alone can stand you in stead, and by which alone you can obtain a right to eternal life. You must then either come to Christ, or perish for ever.

OF SIN IN GENERAL

1 JOHN 3:4.—Sin is the transgression of the law.

IN these words we have an answer to that question, 'What is sin?' It is a transgression of the law: for 'where no law is, there is no

transgression,' Rom. 4:15. But because the word transgression seems to import something positive and actual, therefore it is added in the Catechism, it is a 'want of conformity unto the law,' which is a more general definition: and this meaning the word in the original most properly bears. Hence both a want of conformity unto the law of God, and a transgression of it, are taken into the description; and in effect they are both one thing.

In the further illustration of this subject, it will be proper to shew,

I. What that law is whereof sin is the transgression.

II. Wherein the nature of sin consists.

III. Wherein the evil thereof lies.

IV. Deduce a few inferences.

I. I am to shew what is that law whereof sin is the transgression. It is the law of God, even any law of his whereby he lays any duty upon any of the children of men, whether it be the natural law which is written even in the hearts of all men, Rom. 2:15 or the revealed law and will of God, written in the Bible, whether it be the law strictly so called, or the gospel, whose great command is to believe in Christ; the transgression of which command is the great sin of the hearers of the gospel. In a word, the law of which sin is the transgression, is any law or command of God which he obliges us to obey. More particularly,

1. There is a law engraven upon the hearts of men by nature, which was in force long before the promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai. This is the light of reason, and the dictates of natural conscience concerning those moral principles of good and evil, which have an essential equity in them, and shew man his duty to God, to his neighbour, and to himself. There is a law in all men by nature, which is a rule of good and evil. They have notions of right and wrong in their consciences; which is evident by those laws which are

common in all nations for the preservation of human society, the encouraging of virtue, and discouraging of vice. These laws are to be found among men who have not the benefit of divine revelation for regulating their lives. Now, what standard else can they have for these but common reason, and the light of nature? Every son and daughter of Adam brings with them into the world a law in their breast; and when reason clears up itself from the clouds of sense, they can distinguish between good and evil, between things which ought to be done, and things which they should avoid. Every man finds a law in his heart that checks and rebukes when he offends, and cherishes and encourages him when he does good. None are without a legal indictment and a legal execution within themselves, Rom. 2:14, 15.

2. There is another law which was given to the Jewish nation by the ministry of Moses. This is spoken of by Christ, John 17:19. 'Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? By this we are to understand the whole system of divine precepts concerning ceremonial rites, judicial processes, and moral duties. Accordingly there was a threefold law given by Moses.

(1.) The ceremonial law, which was a certain system of divine positive precepts, with relation to the external worship of God. It was wholly taken up in enjoining those observances of sacrifices and offerings, and various methods of purifications and cleansings which were typical of Christ, and of that sacrifice of his which alone was able to take away sin.

(2.) The judicial law consisted of those institutions which God prescribed the Jews for their civil government. For, whereas, in other commonwealths, the chief magistrates give laws unto the people; in this the laws for their religion and for their civil government were both divine, and both immediately from God. So that the judicial law was given them to be the standing law of their nation, according to which all actions and suits between party and party were to be tried

and determined; as in all other nations there are particular laws and statutes for the decision of controversies that may arise among men.

3. There is the moral law which is a system or body of those precepts which carry an universal and natural equity in them, being so conformable to the light of reason, and the dictates of every man's conscience, that as soon as ever they are declared and understood, we must needs subscribe to the justice and righteousness of them. We have the sum of this law in the ten commandments. This law continues in its full force and power, obliging the conscience as a standing rule for our obedience. Our Lord tells us, Matt. 5:17 that 'he came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil them.' The ceremonial law was abolished by the death of Christ, and the judicial law, so far as it concerned the nation of the Jews as a commonwealth and body politic, particularly touching their not marrying out of their own tribes, their not alienating the inheritance of their fathers, the raising up of seed to their deceased brother, &c., but such of these political laws as are common to men in general, and founded upon the law of nature, are still binding and in force, such as the laws for punishing criminals and other offenders, the laws against oppressing of widows, orphans, strangers, the fatherless, &c. These are a standing rule of equity and justice; they are of a moral nature, and therefore of perpetual obligation. So that the law of which sin is the transgression, is to us the law of nature in our hearts, and the moral law contained in the scriptures, and summed up in the decalogue, as well as the positive laws of the gospel of Christ.

II. I proceed to shew wherein the nature of sin consists. It consists in a want of conformity to the law of God, or a disconformity thereto. The law of God is the rule; whatsoever is over this rule, is sin. The law of God is set as a mark to us; and so the word sin, in the first language properly signifies a not hitting the mark; and transgression is a swerving from the right line, or a going off the way. So it is called 'a going aside,' Psal. 14:3. Now, nothing is conformable to the law which is not perfectly so; for if it be in the least disagreeable thereto, it is not conformable to it, more than that which wants half an inch of

an ell is truly an ell of measure; and therefore any want of that conformity is sin. The law of God requires universal conformity to it. Now the law or command of God requires a twofold conformity.

1. A conformity of the heart to it. It reaches the inward man, seeing God is a spirit, and that omniscient One who knows the heart; and the whole heart must be subject to him. Therefore our Saviour says, Mark 12:30. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.'

2. A conformity of the life both in words and deeds. Hence says David, Psal. 24:3, 4. 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.' And forasmuch as the law requires some things, and forbids other things both in heart and life, the want of conformity to it in these respects, either in heart or life, is sin. Hence we may infer,

1. Sin is no positive being, but a want of due perfection, a defect, an imperfection in the creature; and therefore it is, (1.) Not from God, but from the creature itself. (2.) It is not a thing to glory in, more than the want of all things. (3.) It is a thing we have reason to be humbled for, and have great need to have removed. (4.) It is not a thing to be desired, but fled from and abhorred, as the abominable thing which God hateth.

2. Original sin is truly and properly sin. Look to yourselves as you came into the world, and ye must smite on your breast, before ye have sucked the breasts, and say, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' For we come into it with Adam's sin imputed, Rom. 5:12 stript of original righteousness, and the whole nature corrupted. This is the sin of our nature, being a want of conformity in our souls to the law of God, which requires all moral perfection of us, Matth. 5 ult. 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' Instead of which we have a bent of soul quite contrary to the law,

Rom. 8:7. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.'

3. The first motions of sin, and the risings of that natural corruption in us, before it be completed with the consent of the will to the evil motion, are truly and properly sin. The apostle calls this lust, and distinguishes it from sin, i e. the sin of our nature, and from the consent to it and execution of it, which he calls 'obeying these lusts,' Rom. 6:12 and tells us that it is condemned by the law, Rom. 7:7. Therefore a thing may be our sin, though we know it not to be so, 1 Tim. 1:13 and though it be not our will, yea though against our will, Rom. 7:16. For it is neither our knowledge, or opinion, nor our will, but the law of God, that is the rule.

4. All consent of the heart to and delight in motions towards things forbidden by the law of God are sins, though these never break forth into action, but die where they were born in the inmost corners of our hearts, Matth. 5:28. 'Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' Speculative filthiness is a disconformity to the law. There is heart murder as well as actual murder, ver. 22.

5. All omissions of the internal duties we owe to God and our neighbours are sins, as want of love to God or our neighbours. Want of due fear of God, trust and hope in him, &c. are internal sins of omission.

6. Hence a man sins by undue silence and undue speaking, when the cause of God and truth require it; seeing the law bids us speak in some cases, but never speak what is not good.

7. Hence also a man's sins, when he omits outward duties that are incumbent on him to perform, as well as when he commits sin of whatever kind in his life.

8. Lastly, The least failure in any duty is sin; and whatever comes not up in perfection to the law is sinful. And therefore we sin in every

thing we do, and our best duties deserve damnation, and cannot be accepted according to the law. Wherefore the duties of wicked men are absolutely rejected, seeing they are under the law; and the duties of the godly are no otherwise accepted, but as washed in the blood of Christ, which takes away the sin cleaving to them.

Further, nothing can be a sin but what is a transgressing of the law of God, who only is Lord over the conscience. Therefore, if there be no law of God in the case, there is no transgression affecting the conscience. But it must be considered, that the law of God commands some things expressly, and others things by good consequence. No law of God commands a servant expressly to do such and such a particular piece of work that is lawful, which he is bidden do by his master; but the law of God says, 'Servants, obey your masters;' and therefore it is sin if he do not that work. The case is the same as to men's laws. Therefore the apostle says, Rom. 13:5. 'Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.' Now, men's laws are either contrary to God's laws, or agreeable and subservient thereto, as being for the glory of God, or the good of the nation in general. As to the first of these, ye cannot obey without sin, as if the Queen and Parliament should command you to receive human ceremonies in the worship of God. As to other things that are good and just, we are obliged to obey, as is clear from Rom. 13; and therefore the conscience is not altogether unconcerned in the laws of men. And therefore, if ye would be tender Christians, before ye go against the laws of the land, consider well whether their commands be unlawful, or whether they be such as are good and just; for doubtless magistrates have a power to make laws for the good of the land in general; and what they so make we are obliged to respect, otherwise we condemn the ordinance of God, and regard not the good of our neighbour, and thereby sin against God; as is acknowledged in the case of those that now export grain, to the general distress of the country. And I apprehend, that if we would lay the case home to ourselves, we would have less liberty than we have in some things that are not scrupled at.

III. I come now to shew wherein the evil of sin lies. It lies,

1. And principally, in the wrong done to God, and its contrariety, (1.) To his nature, which is altogether holy. Hence the Psalmist says, Psal. 51:4. 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.' David had exceedingly wronged Uriah in defiling his wife, and procuring the death of himself; yet he considers his great sin in that matter as chiefly against God, and contrary to his holy nature. (2.) In its contrariety to God's will and law, which is a sort of a copy of his nature. And God being all good, and the chief good, sin must needs be a sort of infinite evil.

2. In the wrong it doth to ourselves: 'He that sinneth against me,' says the personal Wisdom of God, 'wrongeth his own soul,' Prov. 8:36. For, (1.) It leaves a stain and spiritual pollution on the soul, whereby it becomes filthy and vile; and therefore sin is called filthiness, and is said to defile the soul, whereupon follows God's loathing the sinner, Isa. 1:15 and shame and confusion on the sinner himself, Gen. 3:7. (2.) It brings on guilt, whereby the sinner is bound over to punishment, according to the state in which he is, until his sin be pardoned. This ariseth from the justice of God and the threatening of his law; which brings on all miseries whatsoever.

But more particularly upon this head, when men pass the bounds and limits which God hath set them in his law, then they transgress it. All the violations of negative precepts are transgressions of God's law. The design of the moral law is to keep men within the bounds of their duty; and when they sin they go beyond them. Sin is indeed the greatest of evils; it is directly opposite to God the supreme good. The definition that is given of sin expresses its essential evil. It is the transgression of the divine law, and consequently it opposes the rights of God's throne, and obscures the glory of his attributes, which are exercised in the moral government of the world. God is our King, our Lawgiver, and our Judge. From his right and propriety in us as his creatures, his title to and sovereign power and dominion over us doth arise and flow. Man is endued with the powers of

understanding and election, to conceive and choose what is good, and to reject what is evil; is governed by a law, even the declared will of his Maker. Now, sin, being a transgression of this law, contains many evils in it. As,

1. It is high rebellion against the sovereign Majesty of God, that gives the life of authority to the law. Therefore divine precepts are enforced with the most proper and binding motive to obedience. I am the Lord. He that commits sin, especially with pleasure and design, implicitly denies his dependence upon God as his Maker and Governor, and arrogates to himself an irresponsible liberty to do his own will. This is clearly expressed by those atheistical designers, who said, 'Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us? Psal. 12:4. The language of men's actions, which is more convincing than their words, plainly declares, that they despise his commandments, and contemn his authority, as if they were not his creatures and subjects.

2. It is an extreme aggravation of this evil, that sin, as it is a disclaiming our homage to God, so it is in true account a yielding subjection to the devil; for sin is in the strictest propriety his work. The original rebellion in paradise was by his temptation; and all the actual and habitual sins of men, since the fall, are by his efficacious influence. He darkens the carnal mind; he sways and rules the stubborn will; he excites and inflames the vitious affections, and imperiously rules in the children of disobedience. He is therefore styled the prince and god of this world. And what more contumelious indignity can, there be, than to prefer to the glorious Creator of heaven and earth, a damned spirit, the most cursed part of the whole creation? More particularly, sin strikes at the root of all the divine attributes.

- (1.) It is contrary to the unspotted holiness of God, which is the peculiar glory of the Deity. Of all the glorious and benign constellations of the divine attributes which shine in the law of God, his holiness hath the brightest lustre. God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works: but the most precious and venerable

monument of his holiness is the law. This is a true draught of his image, and a clear copy of his nature and will. It is the perspicuous rule of our duty, without any blemish or imperfection. See what a high encomium the apostle gives it, 'The commandment is holy, just, and good,' Rom. 7:12. It enjoins nothing but what is absolutely good, without the least mixture and tincture of evil. It is a full and complete rule, in nothing defective, and in nothing superfluous, but comprehends the whole duty of man. The sum of it is set down by the apostle, Tit. 2:11. We are to live soberly, i. e. we are to abstain from every thing that may blemish and stain the excellency of our reasonable nature. We are to live righteously. This respects the state and situation wherein God hath placed us in the world for the advancing of his glory. It includes and comprehends in it all the respective duties we owe to others, to whom we are united by the bands of nature, of civil society, or of spiritual communion. And we are to live godly, which takes in all the internal and outward duties which we owe to God, who is the Sovereign of our spirits, whose will must be the rule, and his glory the end of all our actions. In short the law is so contrived and framed, that abstracting from the authority of the Lawgiver, its holiness and goodness lays an eternal obligation upon us to obey its dictates. Now, sin is directly and formally a contrariety to the infinite sanctity and purity of God; consisting in a not doing what the law commands, or in doing that which it expressly forbids; and God cannot look upon it, but with infinite detestation, Hab. 1:13. He cannot but hate that which is opposite to the glory of his nature, and to the lustre of all his perfections.

(2.) Sin vilifies the wisdom of God, which prescribed the law to men as the rule of their duty. The divine wisdom shines resplendently in his laws. They are all framed with an exact congruity to the nature of God, and his relation to us, and to the faculties of man before he was corrupted. And thus the divine law being a bright transcript both of God's will and his wisdom, binds the understanding and will, which are the leading faculties in man, to esteem and approve, to consent to and choose, all his precepts as best. Now, sin vilifies the infinite wisdom of God, both as to the precepts of the law, the rule of our

duty, and the sanction annexed to it for confirming its obligation. It taxes the precepts as an unequal yoke, and as too severe and rigid a confinement to our wills and actions. Thus the impious rebels complained of old, 'The ways of the Lord are not equal:' they are injurious to our liberties, they restrain and infringe them, and are not worthy of our study and observation. And it accounts the rewards and punishments which God has annexed as the sanction of the law to secure our obedience to its precepts, weak and ineffectual motives to serve that purpose. And thus it reflects upon the wisdom of the Lawgiver as lame and defective, in not binding his subjects more firmly to their duty.

(3.) Sin is a high contempt and horrid abuse of the divine goodness, which should have a powerful influence in binding man to his duty. His creating goodness is hereby contemned, which raised us out of the dust of the earth unto an excellent and glorious being. Our parents were indeed instrumental in the production of our bodies; but the variety and union, the beauty and usefulness, of the several parts, was the high design of his wisdom, and the excellent work of his hands. Man's body is composed of as many miracles as members, and is full of wonders. The lively idea and perfect exemplar of that regular fabric was modelled in the divine mind. This affected David with holy admiration, Psal. 139:14, 15, 16. The soul, or principal part, is of a celestial original, inspired by the Father of Lights. The faculties of understanding and election are the indelible characters of our honour and dignity above the brutes, and make us capable to please God and enjoy our Maker. Now, God's design in giving us our being was to communicate of his own fulness to, and to be actively glorified by intelligent creatures, Rev. 4:11. None are so void of rational sentiments, as not to own, that it is our indispensable duty and reasonable service to offer up ourselves an entire living sacrifice to the glory of God. What is more natural, according to the laws of uncorrupted reason, than that love should correspond with love? As the one descends in benefits, the other should ascend in praise and thankfulness. Now, sin breaks all these sacred bonds of grace and gratitude, which engage us to love and obey our Maker. He is the just

Lord of all our faculties, intellectual and sensitive; and the sinner employs them all as weapons of unrighteousness to fight against God. Again, it is he that upholds and preserves us by the powerful influence of his providence, which is a renewed creation every moment, daily surrounding us with many mercies. All the goodness which God thus bestows upon men, the sinner abuses against him. This is the most unworthy, shameful, and monstrous ingratitude imaginable. This makes forgetful and unthankful men more brutish than the dull ox or stupid ass, who serve and obey those that feed and keep them. Yea it sinks them below the insensible part of the creation, which invariably observes the law and order prescribed by the Creator. This is astonishing degeneracy. It was the complaint of God himself, Isa. 1:2. 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.'

(4.) The sinner disparages the divine justice, in promising himself peace and safety, notwithstanding the wrath and vengeance that is denounced against him by the Lord. He labours to dissolve the inseparable connexion that God hath placed between sin and punishment, which is not a mere arbitrary constitution, but founded upon the desert of sin, and the infinite rectitude of the divine nature, which unchangeably hates it. The sinner sets the divine attributes a contending as it were with one another, presuming that mercy will disarm justice, and suspend its power by restraining it from taking vengeance upon impenitent sinners. And thus sinners become bold and resolute in their impious courses, like him mentioned, Deut. 29:19 who said, 'I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.' This casts such an aspersion on the justice of God, that he solemnly threatens the severest vengeance for it; as you may see in ver. 20. 'The Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven.'

(5.) Sin strikes against the omniscience of God, and at least denies it implicitly. There is such a turpitude adhering to sin, that it cannot endure the light of the sun, nor the light of conscience, but seeks to be concealed under a mask of virtue or a veil of darkness. What is said of the adulterer and the thief, is true in proportion of every sinner, 'If a man sees them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.' And hence it is, that many who would blush and tremble if they were surprised in their sinful actings by a child or a stranger, are not at all afraid of the eye of God, though he narrowly notices all their sins in order to judge them, and will judge them in order to punish them.

(6.) Lastly, Sin bids a defiance to the divine power. This is one of the essential attributes of God that makes him so terrible to devils and wicked men. He hath both a right to punish and power enough to revenge every transgression of his law that sinners are guilty of. Now, his judicial power is supreme and his executive power is irresistible. He can with one stroke dispatch the body to the grave, and the soul to the pit of hell, and make men as miserable as they are sinful: and yet sinners as boldly provoke him as if there were no danger. We read of the infatuated Syrians, how they foolishly thought that God the protector of Israel had only power on the hills but not in the valleys, and therefore renewed the war to their own destruction. Thus proud sinners enter the lists with God, and range an army of lusts against the armies of heaven, and, being blindly bold, run on headlong upon their own ruin. They neither believe God's all-seeing eye, nor fear his almighty hand. You see then what an evil sin is in its nature. It is high rebellion against God, and strikes at the root of all his attributes.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. If ye would see your sins, look to the law of God. That is the glass wherein we may see our ugly face. Hence the apostle says, Rom. 7:7. 'I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.' Look to it for what is past and

present, in order to your being humbled in the sight of a holy God. Look to it for your direction, if you would shun the fatal rocks of sin for the time to come. It is not what this man says, but what the word of God says, that is to be the rule of your duty.

2. See here what presumption it is in men to make that duty which God has not made so, and that sin which God has not made so in religion. This is for men to set themselves in God's room, and their will for the divine will. This is true superstition, however far the guilty seem to themselves and others to be from it. And in this too many of different denominations agree, making that duty and sin which God never made so. In this general they agree, however they differ in particulars. This is expressly forbidden, Deut. 4:2. 'Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it.' Remarkable is the reason of this prohibition, 'that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.' For to both agrees what our Lord said, Matt. 15:3. 'Why do ye transgress the commandment of God by your traditions?' Witness the deep ignorance of matters of salvation and the power of godliness, wherein many are kept by reason of these principles, which have no footing in the word of God.

3. Flee to Jesus Christ for the pardon of sin, for his blood and Spirit to remove the same. All the waters of the sea will not wash it out, but that blood alone. And repent and forsake your sin, or it will be your ruin. Consider it is the greatest evil. For,

(1.) It is most contrary to the nature of God, who is the greatest good; and that which is most contrary to the greatest good, must needs be the greatest evil. It may be looked on as the nadir to zenith. The devil is not so contrary to God: for God gave the devil a being, but not sin. It is sin that makes the devil opposite to God; it is the master, he the scholar. The fire is hotter than the water which it heats. Sin fights against God; it is a deicide; and, as one says, the sinner so far as in him lies, destroys the nature of God. Sin is a dethroning of God, yea it strikes at his being. It musters up its forces in the open field

against God, and when it is beaten from thence, it has its strong holds to go to; yea, like the thief on the cross, when it is crucified, it spits its venom against him. It is a walking contrary to him; and it rises against him even to the last gasp.

(2.) Sin is the mother of all evils that ever were or shall be. It is the big-bellied monster that is delivered daily of all other evils as its births. It is that which has brought forth all the fire-brands that ever were. What cast the angels out of heaven, or Adam out of paradise? Sin draws the sword against nations, makes women husbandless, mothers childless, and brings on wars, famine and pestilence. Personal evils, whether on soul or body, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, are all from sin. It must needs then be the greatest evil.

(3.) Sin is the concluding stroke of wrath on the soul. It is that to which people are entirely given up. And what is it that makes hell in the world, that God gives as the last stroke after all the rest? Why, it is to give up the soul to sin; Ezek. 24:13. 'Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee,' That is the doom, 'Let him that is filthy be filthy still.' He that was delivered up to Satan, was restored again: but we never hear of any being restored who were given up to themselves. Better be given up to the devil than to sin.

OF THE FIRST SIN IN PARTICULAR

GEN. 3:6, 7.—And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he aid eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked: and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

IN these words we are distinctly informed how the covenant of works was broken, and our first parents stripped of their primitive innocence and integrity. Eve seduced by the devil, first ate of the forbidden fruit, and Adam followed her example. The act being completed by both, they immediately discovered, to their shame and dishonour, the miserable state they were reduced to.

The words sufficiently found the following doctrine.

DOCT. 'Our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, by eating the forbidden fruit.'

I have already shewn why the forbidden tree was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as also of what use it was in the covenant of works. It remains that we shew,

I. How the eating of the forbidden fruit was the first sin of our first parents, by which they fell.

II. Why this fruit was forbidden.

III. The aggravations of it.

IV. Deduce some inferences.

I. I am to shew how the eating of the forbidden fruit was the first sin of our first parents, by which they fell. It is not to be thought, that they were wholly innocent till they had the forbidden fruit in their mouths; for their coveting it in their hearts behoved of necessity to go before that; but the eating of it was that whereby their sin and apostacy from their Creator was completed. The first step of their sin seems then to be doubting and unbelief of the threatening, Gen. 3:4, 6. Their faith as to the truth of the threatening being first foundered, their heart plied to the temptation; and then succeeded a lust after the forbidden fruit; and then the sin was completed by their actually eating it, as in the words of the text.

Satan, the old serpent, very artfully laid his train for enticing our first parents to eat this forbidden fruit. For he attacked the woman when alone, at a distance from her husband; he endeavoured to make her doubt of the truth of the divine threatening; he presented the fatal object, as fruit pleasant to the eye, and to be desired to make one wise: he pretended a higher regard for them than their sovereign Creator, who, he tacitly insinuated, grudged their happiness: and he used means to persuade them, that they should be like God, in the vast extent of their knowledge, upon their eating the delectable morsel. Thus the eyes of their mind were first blemished by a mist from hell; which being admitted, gradually darkened their understanding, so that first doubting, and then disbelief of the threatening, ensued. Their will was easily conquered to a compliance with the temptation; then a corrupt affection to the tree seized them, discovering itself in a lustful looking at it: then the hand took it, and the mouth ate it, and the fatal morsel was swallowed.

II. I am next to shew why this fruit was forbidden.

1. It was not because God grudged the happiness of our first parents, as the devil blasphemously alleged, whom the event proved a liar, John 8:44. Nor yet,

2. Because there was any evil in the fruit itself; for that could not be; for we are told, Gen. 1 ult. that, at the close of the creation every thing was very good. This fruit was not forbidden because it was evil, but it was evil because it was forbidden. It was forbidden for the trial of man's obedience. Not that God knew not what was in man, and what he would be, but to discover the creature's weakness to himself without God, and that he might thence take occasion of advancing his own glory impaired by the sin of man, in a more illustrious manner than if innocent Adam had continued in his primitive state. But it may be asked, Why did God make choice of this for the trial of man? I answer, God did so most reasonably. For,

(1.) This being a thing in itself indifferent, was most meet for the trial of his obedience. For hereby his obedience was to turn upon the precise point of the will of God, which would have been the plainest evidence of obedience. Had it been to love God or his neighbour, nature itself taught him to do so, and by the natural make of his soul he was inclined to this. What trial would that have been to a man newly created, and loaded with benefits from God, not to take another God, worship images, or take his name in vain, when he saw all to be God's creatures or servants; to keep the sabbath, which was to return once a-week only? He had no father or mother to honour, none to kill but her that was his own flesh, none to commit adultery with, none to steal from, none to bear false witness against, none to covet their goods. Thus the prohibition of a thing in itself indifferent was a proper test, and the only proper test for the trial of man.

(2.) Thus man's obedience or disobedience would be most clear and conspicuous, being in an external thing whereof his very senses might be judge; which could not be in the internal acts of obedience.

(3.) This was most proper for asserting the sovereign dominion of God, who had set him down in a beautiful paradise, and made him lord of the world. Was it not very reasonable that God should keep one single tree from him, as a testimony of his holding God as his great Landlord?

(4.) This was most useful and necessary to man, as a memorandum of the state wherein he was created. For man was created with a free will to good, whereof the tree of life was an evidence: but also to evil, whereof the tree of knowledge of good and evil was an evidence. So that in effect it was a continual watchword to him, and a beacon set up before him to beware of dashing on the rock of sin.

(5.) It was a great mercy to man, in that, beside the natural make of his soul, which was turned towards God as his chief happiness and end, he had this prohibition set to keep it in that posture. For as Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hand, Exod. 17:12, so man had the

fabric of his body looking upward, and this fair tree forbidden him, to teach him that his happiness lay not in the creatures, but in God. So that this tree being forbidden was a sign of emptiness hung before the creature's door, with that inscription, Here is not your rest; the creature's hand pointing man away from themselves to God, as the alone fountain of happiness.

(6.) Lastly, This was a compend of the whole law of God, wherein all was summarily comprehended, viz. love to God, and his neighbour, as will afterwards be made appear.

III. I come now to consider the evil of this first sin. Some may be ready to say, Was not the eating of the forbidden fruit a little sin? So it appears indeed in the sight of blind man, whose eye being put out with it, sees not the great majesty of God, and the horrid evil of the action. But indeed it was more horrible if ye consider,

1. The aggravations of it.
2. The nature of it
3. The effects of it.

First, Let us view the aggravations of this first sin. Consider,

1. The person who did it. I may say it was not a sinner that sinned, but an innocent person, free from all inclination to evil; one whom God made able to stand if he would, and endued with the image of God, without any mixture of sinful ignorance, perverseness of will, or irregularity of affections. No wonder to see a man with a poor stock soon broken: but that a man who had such a large stock should play the bankrupt, was horrid indeed.

2. What was the thing for which he broke the command. Achan had a wedge of gold to tempt him, and Judas thirty pieces of silver to entice his covetous disposition. But what was the enticing object in Adam's case? The fruit of a tree: a small thing indeed: but the smaller the

thing was, the more inexcusable the sinner, whom Satan could draw after him by so slender a thread. What need had he of that, when God had given him abundance of other fruit? But, with David, Adam spares his own flock, and takes his neighbour's one lamb.

3. The persons wronged by this sin. He sinned against God himself, to whom he owed the strictest obedience; against his soul and body, upon which he brought wrath and a curse; against all his posterity, who were then in his loins, upon whom his sin has entailed a scene of evils, under which the human race will groan to the end of time. Never did one sin strike against so many at once.

4. The time of this transgression. Man was scarcely well come out of the hand of his Creator, till he lifted up his heel against him. He stood very short while, till he turned giddy with ambition, and fell into disgrace. It is thought probable, he fell the same day he was created; and such an early revolt from his allegiance was a very high aggravation of his sin.

5. The place where the crime was committed. In paradise, where every plant and flower were proclaiming the glory of God, and where he wanted nothing that was necessary for him. In the presence-chamber, as it were, he struck at his Sovereign Lord and King. So his offence was aggravated like the murder of Zacharias, whom the Jews slew between the temple and the altar, Matt. 23:35.

Secondly, The nature of this sin. It was not one single sin, but a complication of all evils, a violation of the whole law of God, and a total apostacy from him in heart, lip, and life.* This was a sin whereby at one touch both the natural and positive law was trampled under foot; yea, by which all the ten commandments were struck at, at once.

1. Did they not chuse new gods: when, by eating this fruit, they made their belly their god; self their god; nay the devil their god, when they conspired with him against God, being filled with pride and ambition

as he to be like God; when they believed the devil and mistrusted God, and shook off the yoke of his dominion, turning rebels to him, and being most unthankful for the divine goodness expressed towards them? Rebel-man set up a trinity, (1.) Of his belly, for sensuality, (2.) Of himself, by ambition; and, (3.) Of the devil, by believing him, and disbelieving his Creator.

2. Though man at first received, yet he did not observe that great ordinance of God about the forbidden fruit. He contemned that ordinance which God had most plainly appointed, and would needs carve out to himself how he would serve the Lord.

3. He took the name of the Lord his God in vain, despising his attributes, whereby he makes himself known, his justice, truth, power, &c. profaning God's ordinance, that sacramental tree; abusing his word, by not giving credit to it; and abusing his works, that creature which he should not have touched; and violently misconstruing the work of providence, as if God, by that act of forbidding them that tree, had minded to keep them from happiness. And therefore though there was no man to punish them, God suffered them not to escape his righteous judgment.

4. He was so far from remembering the Sabbath to keep it holy, that he put himself out of all case for serving God ere it came, by this means. He kept not that state of rest wherein God had placed him.

5. Adam honoured not his Father in heaven. Both our first parents minded not their relative duties. Eve forgets herself, and acts without advice of her husband, to the ruin of both; and Adam, instead of admonishing her to repent, yields to the temptation too, and so confirms her in her wickedness. They forgot all duty to their posterity. Therefore their days were not long in the land which the Lord their God gave them.

6. He was the greatest murderer that ever lived. By this act he was a child-murderer, cutting the throats of all his posterity; and he was a

self-murderer too.

7. Our first parents were fain to cover their nakedness with fig-leaves, which their luxury and sensuality had brought them too.

8. Adam committed theft; and was but a thief and a robber in taking that which was not his own, against the will of the great Owner. He was the Achan in the camp.

9. He bare false witness against the Lord, when he ate of the forbidden fruit. It was an avouching, that God's word was not to be believed, that the Lord dealt hardly and scantily with him, and grudged his happiness.

10. He was discontented with that happy state wherein God had placed him. He was not content with his lot, and therefore, like another king of Babylon, he coveted an evil covetousness to his house; which ruined both himself and them.

Thirdly, Consider the effects of this first sin.

1. God was robbed of his glory, that he should have had from the creature's active obedience. He was made and well qualified for glorifying his Creator; but breaking covenant with God, and falling under the curse of the law, he was quite indisposed for that work. He could aim no more at this mark which God set before him.

2. God's image was defaced; the King of Heaven's picture was rent in pieces. What a huge offence would it be to come into a workman's shop, and with one touch dash in pieces a curious piece of work that he had made? Yet thus offensively did Adam behave, spurning at the image of God, and quite defacing it from his soul.

3. Adam and all his posterity were ruined by this fatal transgression. It opened the sluice to all that flood of miseries that has overspread the face of the earth. At this gate sin and death entered into the world, where they will reign till time shall be no more. God is just

and holy; and if the first sin had not deserved this punishment, it would not have been inflicted with such a mark of indignation.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. Say not when ye are tempted, it is but a little sin and therefore ye may act it. Consider, that which in the commission is but as the little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, when God comes to judgment, or conscience gets up, will cover the face of the heavens. Little do ye know what a small temptation may be big with. A man may drown in a little rivulet as well as in the deep sea.

2. Then God's will is a sufficient bar to hold us back from any thing if we would be safe. And therefore let us know, that where there is no more to be a hedge to us but the bare command of God, if we leap over it, a serpent will bite us. Ah! how few know what it is to be restrained by a bare command of God! Ah! the generality leap over the hedge of God's will and law, and live as if there were no restraint upon them from the God of heaven, who will severely punish all transgressions of his law.

3. Beware of the pleasure of your senses, and the pride of life. The lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh ruined the world at first, and do so still. The devil shoots his darts by the eye into the soul, which is weaker now than it was in the primitive state, and more liable to deception. Therefore watch your eyes and ears. Have a care of sensuality. Eating ruined Adam and Eve; and still ruins many, who eat not for God or his glory, but to satisfy their sensual appetite, as they did.

4. Lastly, O prize Christ, who to redeem lost man, did hang upon a tree, and drink the cup of wrath as the bitter fruits of sin, and was buried in a garden. The first Adam ate of the forbidden tree, and Christ hung on the cursed tree. Adam's preposterous love to his wife made him sin, and Christ's love to his spouse made him suffer. Our first parents pleased their sensual appetite with the taste of the

pleasant fruit of the forbidden tree, and therefore Christ got vinegar mixed with gall to drink upon the cross-tree. Adam sinned in a garden, and in a garden was Christ buried. By eating the forbidden fruit, death came upon all men to condemnation; and by eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of Christ, life is brought to the soul. O then, sinners, flee unto the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath restored that which the first Adam took away; and ye shall be reinstated in all that happiness and favour with God which he forfeited by eating the forbidden fruit.

OF OUR FALL IN ADAM

ROMANS 5:19.—For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

THIS text consists of two propositions. The first is, By one man's disobedience many were made sinners. Where consider,

1. Who that one man was. It was Adam. This is plain from ver. 14 and to no other can it agree.
2. What that disobedience of his was. It was his first sin, the eating of the forbidden fruit. This was that sin that first broke into the world, and opened the door to death, ver. 12. This was the transgression of Adam, ver. 14 that offence or fall, ver. 15 the offence of one, or, as the Greek will bear, the one offence 'tou henos paraptomati,' here called disobedience, for thereby he hearkened to the devil, not to God.
3. Whom it concerned; many. This is in effect the same with the all mentioned, ver. 14. But the alteration of the phrase is not without reason: for there is an exception here of the man Christ, of whom he speaks in the next clause. It reached many men, but not all simply; he, and he only, was excepted.

4. How it touched them; they were made sinners by it. Now, there are only two ways how men might be made sinners by the disobedience of Adam, viz. either by imputation or imitation. The last is not meant. (1.) Because some of those many who are made sinners, are not capable of imitation or actual sin, viz. infants. (2.) Because we are made righteous, not by the imitation, but imputation, of Christ's righteousness; but as we are made righteous by the one, so we are made sinners by the other.

5. The foundation of this imputation, which is a relation betwixt the one and the many here implied; for unless there had been some bond of union betwixt the one and many, the sin of that one could not have been imputed to the many. There was indeed a natural bond betwixt him and us: but this was not the ground of the imputation; for we have such an union with our immediate parents, whose sin is not thus imputed. It behoved then to be a moral bond, by the way of a covenant, he being the representative of many in the covenant of works. From these words there arises this doctrine, viz.

DOCT. 'The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.'

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What sin of Adam's it was that they who sinned and fell with him, sinned and fell in.

II. Who they were that sinned and fell in Adam.

III. How the first sin of Adam comes to be imputed to us.

IV. Conclude with some inferences.

I. I am to shew what sin of Adam's it was that they who sinned and fell with him, sinned and fell in. It was his first sin, the eating of the

forbidden fruit. That sin is also their sin. This was the sin that broke the covenant of works. Other sins of Adam are not imputed to them, more than those of any other private persons. For he was a head only of obedience, not of suffering. So then, Adam quickly betaking himself to the covenant of grace, and placing himself under another head as a private man, ceased to be the head in the covenant of works. Adam had all his children in one ship to carry them to Immanuel's land; by his negligence he dashed the ship on a rock, and broke it all in pieces; and so he and his lay foundering in a sea of guilt: Jesus Christ lets out the second covenant as a rope to draw them to the shore. Adam for himself lays hold on it, while others hold by the broken boards of the ship, till they be by the power of grace enabled to quit them too, as he was.

II. I proceed to shew who they were that sinned and fell in Adam. They were all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation. So,

1. Christ is excepted. Adam's sin was not imputed to the man Christ. This is plain from Heb. 7:26. He was separated from sinners, and was not infected with the plague whereof he was to be the cleanser. And so Christ comes not in under Adam as head, but, as in the text, is opposed to Adam as another head.

Christ was indeed a Son of Adam, as appears from his genealogy brought up to Adam, Luke 3. And it was necessary he should be so, that he might be our near kinsman, and that the same nature that sinned might suffer. But he came not of him by ordinary generation: the extraordinariness of his descent lay in that he was born of a virgin. And upon this account he came not in under Adam in the covenant of works; for Christ was not born by virtue of that blessing of marriage given before the fall, Gen. 1:28 but by virtue of a covenant-promise made after the fall, Gen. 3:15. So that Adam could represent none in that covenant, but such as were to spring from him by virtue of that blessing.

2. All mankind besides sinned and fell with Adam in that first transgression. His sin of eating the forbidden fruit is imputed to them; i. e. is reckoned theirs, as if they had committed it. Consider,

(1.) The scripture plainly testifies, that all sinned in him, Rom. 5:12. 'By one man's sin, death entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' Hence it is plain, that death has not come into the world but in pursuit of sin; all die, for all have sinned. Infants are not exempted more than others. We see graves of an infant's length; yea, sometimes the womb is made their grave, and they get a coffin instead of a cradle. It is long ere infants laugh, but they come into the world crying; a sure evidence of misery. What have they done? What could they do? Yet God is just, and is not pursuing innocents. What then can be the quarrel but this, that they are taken prisoners for the debt contracted by their father? ver. 14.

(2.) All fell with him into misery by that sin. Now, a just God will not involve the innocent with the guilty in the same punishment. Consider,

[1.] All fell under the guilt of eternal wrath for that sin, Rom. 5:16, 18. 'The judgment was by one to condemnation.—By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.' Now, where there is a communion of guilt there must needs be a communion of sin; for the law can bind none over to punishment but for sin. 'All die in Adam,' says the apostle, 1 Cor. 15:22. but it is only the soul that sins that shall die, Ezek. 18:4 therefore all sinned in Adam.

[2.] All fell under the loss of God's image, and the corruption of nature with him. How comes it that all men must say with David, Psal. 2:5. 'Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me?' Take away the imputation of Adam's sin, and there is no foundation for the corruption of nature. It must be some sin that God punishes with the deprivation of original righteousness, which can be no other than the first sin of Adam.

[3.] All the punishments inflicted on Adam and Eve, for that sin, as specified in Gen. 3 are common to mankind, their posterity; and therefore the sin must be so too.

III. I come now to shew how the first sin of Adam comes to be imputed to us. The great reason of this is, because we are all included in Adam's covenant. The covenant was made with him, not only for himself, but for all his posterity. Consider here,

1. It was the covenant of works that was made with Adam, the condition whereof was perfect obedience. This was the first covenant. As for the covenant of grace, it was made with the second Adam.

2. It was made with him for himself. That was the way he himself was to attain perfect happiness; his own stock was in that ship.

3. It was made not only for himself, but for all his posterity descending from him by ordinary generation. So that he was not here as a mere private person, but as a public person, the moral head and representative of all mankind. Hence the scripture holds forth Adam and Christ, as if there had never been any but these two men in the world, 1 Cor. 15:47. 'The first man is of the earth, earthy, (says he): the second man is the Lord from heaven.' And this he does, because they were two public persons, each of them having under them persons represented by them, Rom. 5:14, 18. 'Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.' This is plain from the imputation of Adam's sin, which necessarily requires this as the foundation of it. We being thus included and represented in that covenant, what he did he did as our head, and therefore it is justly imputed to us.

But some may be ready to say, we made not choice of Adam for that purpose. Ans. (1.) God made the choice, who was as meet to make it for us as we for ourselves. And 'who art thou that repliest against God.' (2.) Adam was our natural head, the common father of us all. Acts 17:26 and who was so meet to be trusted with the concerns of all mankind as he? But to clear further the reasonableness of this imputation, and to still the murmuring of proud nature against the dispensation of God, consider,

1. Adam's sin is imputed to us, because it is ours. For God doth not reckon a thing ours, which is not so, Rom. 2:2.—'The judgment of God is according to truth.' For God's justice doth not punish men for a sin which is in no way theirs. And it is our sin upon the account aforesaid. Even as Christ's righteousness is ours by virtue of our union with him. As if a person that has the plague infect others, and they die, they die, by their own plague, and not by that of another.

2. It was free for God, antecedently to the covenant made with man, either to have annihilated all mankind, or if he had preserved them, to have given them no promise of eternal life in heaven, notwithstanding by natural justice they would have been liable to his wrath in case of sin. Was it not then an act of grace in God to make such a rich covenant as this? and would not men have consented to this representation gladly in this case?

3. Adam had a power to stand if he would, being made after the image of God, Gen. 1:26. He was set down with a stock capable to be improved to the eternal upmaking of all his posterity. So that he was as capable to stand as any afterwards could be for themselves: and this was a trial that would soon have been over, while the other would have been continually a-doing, had men been created independent on him as their representative.

4. He had natural affection the strongest to engage him. He was our father, and all we the children that were in his loins, to whom we had as good ground to trust as to any other creature.

5. His own stock was in the ship; his all lay at stake as well as ours. Forgetting our interest, he behaved to disregard his own, for he had no separate interest from ours.

6. If he had stood, we could never have fallen; he had gained for us eternal happiness; the image of God, and the crown of glory, would have descended from him to us by a sure conveyance.

And is it not reasonable, on the other hand, that if he fell, we should fall and bear the loss? No man quarrels, that when a master sets his land in tack to a man and his heirs upon conditions, if the first possessor break the bargain, the heirs be denuded of it.

7. Lastly, All that quarrel this dispensation must renounce their part in Christ: for we are made righteous by him, as sinners are made guilty by Adam. If we fall in with the one, why not with the other? We chose Christ for our head in the second covenant, no more than we did Adam in the first covenant.

A few inferences shall conclude this subject.

1. Hence see the dreadful nature of sin; one sin could destroy a whole world. What a plague of plagues must this sin be, that has swept away not families, towns, and countries only, but the whole race of mankind! View it in this glass, if you would know it aright.

2. Let this be a lesson to parents. Adam's fall should be a watch-word to every parent, to endeavour by all means to do nothing that may bring ruin on their children. Many times children are destroyed by their parents through their bad example, and their omission of exercising proper discipline and correction on them. Ye that are parents, give your children a good and pious example, accompanied with wholesome precepts and instructions. And watch over and narrowly observe their behaviour, and pray for and with them, that they may be delivered from wrath and condemnation.

3. This doctrine affords a lesson of humility to all. The rich have no cause to boast of their wealth and abundance; for they have a sad heritage left to them; and the poor and needy have the very same. If one man be better than another, no thanks to us; for we are all alike by nature.

4. Hence view and wonder at the redemption purchased for poor fallen sinners by the obedience and death of Christ. Behold here the necessity of it: What could they do for their help that came into the world under a sentence of condemnation?—the seasonableness of this deliverance, when the sentence was passed on all:—the perfection of it; it takes away this first sin, and all others too. How strong must the power of the grace of Christ be, that could stop the torrent of Adam's sin, when increased with innumerable actual transgressions? Rom. 5:16.

5. Lastly, Quit your hold of the first Adam and his covenant, and come to and unite with Christ by faith, and lay hold on his covenant, 1 Cor. 15:22. Flee to and make use of his blood for the taking away of the first sin in particular, and mourn for it before the Lord. If this be not removed, it will ruin you. And to stir you up to a concern about this sin, consider how we are naturally writing after this copy, by our unbelief of the word, our affecting mainly what is forbidden, &c. as I shewed before. The offer of Christ as a Saviour from sin is made to you; and ye are called to embrace him as a Saviour to you in particular. Accept the offer, as ye regard the salvation of your souls; otherwise you will be ruined, not only by the breach of the first covenant, but by despising the second, which is the only means devised by infinite wisdom for the recovery of fallen sinners.

OF THE SINFULNESS OF MAN'S NATURAL STATE

PSAL. 51:5.—Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

MAN that was holy and happy is now fallen; and his fall should never be forgotten, but lamented, though it were with tears of blood. Man's first sin was the spring of all our woes, the poisonous fountain from whence all our misery flowed. It brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery; a state wherein man can do nothing but sin, wherein every thought, every word, and every action is tainted with sin, wherein enmity to God and his holy nature, and rebellion against and opposition to his righteous law universally reign and prevail. In this dismal state to which mankind are reduced by the fall, no true holiness is attainable, for it is a state of sin; and no salvation from wrath can be had, for it is a state of misery. The state we must be brought into, out of our sinful and miserable state under the breach of the covenant of works, if we would attain unto salvation, is the state of grace under the new covenant. Those that are delivered from their natural state, under the broken covenant, are persons effectually called by grace, and are 'in Christ Jesus,' Rom. 8:1. Those that are still under the bondage of the old covenant, are out of Christ, and 'have no hope,' Eph. 2:12. This state is a very sinful and miserable state. For the power that the covenant of works has over them, is a commanding, cursing, and condemning power: it commands them to yield perfect obedience, under pain of the curse, but affords no strength for performing it; and it curses and condemns them for every the least failure. The source of all is the total corruption and depravity of human nature, which we derive from our first father, in whom we all sinned, and with whom we fell, in his first transgression. In the text we have,

1. A plain confession of the being of original sin. Here is sin and iniquity, which the Psalmist owns he had while yet in the womb, sin in which he was shapen, and iniquity in which he was conceived. This was not peculiar to the Psalmist, but is common to all mankind sprung in an ordinary way from the first transgressor Adam.

2. The way of the conveyance of this original sin, viz. by natural generation. In this way every son and daughter of Adam are infected with this leprosy.

3. The malignant efficacy it hath on men's lives; Behold, says David, I was shapen in iniquity, &c. He points out original sin as the fountain of all his actual transgressions. For how can a corrupt fountain send out wholesome streams?

The doctrine observable from the text is,

DOCT. 'The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin, together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.'

In discoursing from this doctrine I will shew,

I. That there is such a thing as original sin.

II. Wherein original sin consists.

III. Deduce some inferences for application.

I. Our first business is to shew, that there is such a thing as original sin. Of this we have melancholy proofs.

1. Consider scripture-testimonies. In the text we have David, a man after God's own heart, yet confessing he was shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin. Adam begets Seth, from whom the whole race of mankind derive their origin, after his own image,' Gen. 5:1 opposed to 'the image of God,' after which he was made, Gen. 1:26 consisting in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. Job says chap. 14:4. 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.' This is God's verdict on all mankind, Gen. 6:5. 'Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.'

2. This is plain from the case of infants, which we all once were. We may plainly read in their faces, that we are covered over with sin and guilt before any other covering come on us. For, (1.) What else mean scripture-ordinances about them? If there were not in them a superfluity of naughtiness, why were they circumcised? if they are not unclean, why are they baptised? This corruption of human nature was also shadowed forth by the law, concerning purifying of women. (2.) Consider the sad effects of sin upon them, which meet them as soon as they come into the world, yea in the womb, such as sickness, pains, death, &c., which says, that 'by nature we are the children of wrath,' Eph. 2:3. (3.) Consider the early appearances of Adam's image in them, before ever they come to the use of reason. What a deal of pride, ambition, curiosity, vanity, wilfulness, and averseness to good, appears in them; and when they creep out of infancy, what obstinacy and incorrigibleness appears in them; so that there is a necessity of using the rod of correction to drive away the foolishness that is bound in their heart, Prov. 22:15.

3. The universal necessity of regeneration plainly proves the corruption of our nature, John 3:3. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Were we not disjointed by nature, what need would there be for us to be taken down, and put up again? If the first birth were right, what need would there be for a second?

II. I come now to shew wherein original sin consists. It consists in these three things: the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of the whole nature.

First, Original sin consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin. Guilt is an obligation to punishment. For this sin, which is ours by imputation, we are liable to punishment. This guilt lies on all men by nature, Rom. 5:18. And this guilt of Adam's first sin is original sin imputed; of which I spoke in the former discourse. The only remedy for it is in Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 15:22. Eph. 1:7. Rom. 3:24.

Secondly, It consists in the want of original righteousness. Original righteousness is that righteousness and entire rectitude of all the faculties of the soul wherein man was created. Man's soul was so adorned with it, that it resembled its great Maker. But now man is stript of these ornaments, he is left quite naked.

1. There is a want of that knowledge in the mind wherewith man was created. That light that was set up in the soul of man is now gone; though the candlestick is not removed, the candle is, Job 11:12. 'For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt.' The mind is like the ostrich, whom God hath deprived of understanding. 'The understanding is darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in men, because of the blindness of their heart, Eph. 4:18. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can ye know them, because they are spiritually discerned,' 1 Cor. 2:14.

2. That righteousness which was in the will of man, that bent and inclination to good, is now removed, Eccl. 7:29. 'I know [says the apostle] that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not,' Rom. 7:18.

3. The holiness of the affections is gone. Spiritual affections have taken the wing, and left the soul as a bird without wings which hath nothing whereby it can mount, Rom. 7:18 forecited.

This want of original righteousness is a sin, being a want of conformity to the law of God, which requires all moral perfection. It is also a punishment of sin, and so is justly inflicted by God. And though the want of this righteousness be sin, yet God's depriving man of it, or rather not giving it him, is a most just act; seeing Adam, having got it for himself and his posterity, threw it away, and God is not obliged to restore it. And it can be no other sin but the first sin, whereof this with-holding of original righteousness is the

punishment. So true it is, that if the imputation of Adam's first sin be denied, original sin is quite rased, there is no foundation left for it.

Thirdly, It consists in the corruption of the whole nature. Concerning which two things are to be considered.

1. That the nature of man is indeed corrupted, We must not think that original sin lies only in the want of original righteousness. No, man is not only void of good qualities naturally, but he is filled with evil ones.

(1.) The scripture holds it forth so, while it calls this sin 'the flesh which lusteth against the Spirit, the old man, the body of death, the law of the members warring against the law of the mind, &c.

(2.) The soul of man cannot be otherwise. It must needs be morally right or wrong; either it is habitually conformable to the law of God, or not; if it be not, its inclinations are against it. The soul has either God's image or that of the devil upon it. If there is not light in the mind, there must be darkness there.

2. Consider the nature and extent of this corruption. As to its extent,

1st. All men are corrupted. There is no exception of any one of Adam's posterity descending from him by ordinary generation: Gen. 6:5. 'God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.' Job 14:4. 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.' The Virgin Mary, of the substance of whose body the holy human nature of Christ was formed by the operation of the Holy Spirit, is included among the rest. Even the children of holy parents are corrupted; for generation is by nature, not by grace. The circumcised father begets an uncircumcised child, as the purest corn that is sown produceth chaff.

2dly, All of every man is corrupted; it is a leprosy that has overspread universally; a leaven that hath leavened the whole lump. It has

overspread,

1. The soul in all its faculties, Tit. 1:15. 'Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.'

1st, If we look to the understanding, there we will see,

(1.) Darkness over all that region. It is the land of darkness and shadow of death, where the very light is darkness; darkness in the abstract, Eph. 5:8. We are born blind, and cannot be restored without a miracle. There is a dreadful stupidity in spiritual things; the natural man cannot take them up, 1 Cor. 2:14.; but he is a fool, and a madman, because in these things he is a mere natural.

(2.) A bitter root of unbelief naturally grows there, which overspreads the whole life. Men by nature are 'children of disobedience,' Eph. 2:2. Or, 'of impersuasibleness.' How like Adam do we look! how universally is that article embraced, 'Ye shall not surely die!' and how does it spread itself through the lives of men, as if they were resolved to fall after the same example of unbelief!

2dly, As for the will, call it no more will, but lust. It is free to evil but not to good. 'God made man upright,' his will straight with his own, with a power in the will to do good and an inclination and bent thereto. But now behold in it,

(1.) A pitiful weakness. Man naturally cannot will what is good and acceptable to God. He cannot produce one holy act until grace change the heart, more than a stone can feel, or a beast reason. Hence the apostle says, Phil. 2:13. 'It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' Rom. 5:6. 'We are without strength.' 2 Cor. 3:5. 'We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God.' Men by nature are dead spiritually 'dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. 2:1. If they will what is good, it is in a carnal manner.

(2.) An aversion to good. We are backward to it, and therefore must be drawn as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Sin is the natural man's element; and as the fish is averse to come out of the water, so is the sinner from the puddle of sin, in which he delights to lie. Hence says our Lord, John 5:40. 'Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.' They were not only naturally unable to come, but they had no inclination to the duty. Their stomachs are full, and, like the full soul that loaths the honey-comb, they nauseate the heavenly food in their offer.

(3.) There is a proneness to evil, a bent and inclination to it, Hos. 11:7. 'My people are bent to backsliding from me.' Hence natural men are mad on idols. Set sin and duty, death and life, cursing and blessing before the natural man, and leave the will to itself, it will naturally run to sin, to death, and the curse, as the waters run down a steep place.

(4.) There is a crossness and contrariety in the will to God and goodness, Rom. 8:7. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' That God forbids a thing is a motive to the will to like it. No fruit is so sweet to the corrupt appetite as the forbidden fruit. Strip sin naked of all its ornaments and allurements, and the natural man will court it for itself. The will naturally lies cross to God.

(1.) It is cross to his nature. He is holiness itself; and the will rejects holiness for itself. Hence men 'say to God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,' Job 21:14. The will is an enemy to the scripture God, and hence they do what they can for the change, Psal. 50:21. It was most agreeable to nature, that the Pagans made their gods profane. The proud man desires to have none above him to controul him, or call him to account, and the natural man wants to have no God, Ps. 14:1.

(2.) It is cross to his will. (1.) To his law, which binds to conformity to God, which the natural man hates, Rom. 8:7. Corrupt nature rises

against this yoke: they would have the law brought down to their corruptions. Hence that is a distinguishing mark of the godly man, 'His delight is in the law of the Lord and in his law doth he meditate day and night,' Psal. 1:2. (2.) To his gospel. The will of man naturally is quite opposite to the grand device of salvation through the Lord Jesus; and natural men, like Judas, would rather hang themselves than go to Christ, submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God, Rom. 10:3. They say, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' Luke 19:14. The gospel is designed for humbling the pride and selfishness of men; but they are for exalting self, and placing it on the throne. It lies cross to the will of God in its chief acts.

(1.) As to the intention, the will is wholly cross and perverse as to the ultimate end. Self is set up for the chief end instead of God, 2 Tim. 3:2. 'Men shall be lovers of their own selves.' In this we follow our first father's footsteps. The will is like a traitor, who, instead of gathering in the rents of the crown to the king, gathers them in to itself.

(2.) As to the choice, Psal. 4:6. 'There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?' God offers himself to be the sinner's portion; but he chases the creatures for his portion, and sin for the way to obtain it.

(5.) There is contumacy in it. The will is wilful in evil and will not be turned, though it should run on the sword-point of vengeance, Ezek. 18:31. 'Why will ye die, O house of Israel?' Like the leviathan in his way, it 'laugheth at the shaking of a spear,' Job 41:29. 'I shall have peace (says the natural man), though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst,' Deut. 29:19. This is the stony heart, which as a stone is insensible, resisting, inflexible, but by the power of divine grace, hard to receive impressions, but as the water to let them go.

3dly, As to the affections, they are quite disordered. While man stood, his reason was subject to the law, and his affections to his

reason: but now, like the unruly horse, they will either not receive, or else run away with the rider, Jer. 2:23, 24.

(1.) The affections are misplaced as to their objects. The natural man is a spiritual monster. His heart is there, where his feet should be, fixed on the earth; his heels are lifted up against Heaven, which his heart should be set on. He loves what he should hate, and hates what he should love; joys in what he ought to mourn for, and mourns for what he should rejoice in; glories in his shame, and is ashamed of his glory; abhors what he should desire, and desires what he should abhor; acting in direct opposition to the apostolical injunction of 'seeking those things which are above,' Col. 1:1.

(2.) When the natural man's affections are fixed on lawful objects, they can keep no bounds. They cannot flow to the creature, without overflowing; they cannot love a lawful object, without over-loving it; nor joy in any created comfort, without excess. The affections are never right, only evil.

Further, this corruption has spread even to the body. That which should be a temple for God is become a garrison of lusts.

1. It incites the soul to sin. What a snare is the temperature of the body to the soul, leading it to the commission of many foul sins! Therefore the godly beat it down as an unruly beast, keep it under, and bring it into subjection, that it cast not the soul into sin and misery, 1 Cor. 9:27. It is the house wherein snares are spread for the soul; so that many, to please their bodies, make shipwreck of their souls.

2. Its members are members of unrighteousness, Rom. 6:13. Are not the eyes and ears the windows whereat death comes in to the soul? The tongue is an untamed beast, by which the impure heart vents its filthiness. The throat is an open sepulchre; the feet run the devil's errands; and the belly is made a god. The body is naturally an agent for Satan, and a magazine of armour against the Lord.

What shall we say? who can express the corruption of nature? The whole man is corrupted. All defilement is in us naturally, Rom. 1:29. The treasure of wickedness is in the heart, Matth. 12:35. It is a cage full of unclean birds. The tongue is a world of iniquity, an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. What an universe of wickedness and impurity must the heart then be?

This is a rude draught of the corruption of human nature in its fallen state, which the Spirit of God in scripture calls flesh, in many passages that might be quoted. The propriety of this expression will be evident from the following particulars.

1. It denotes the degrading and debasing malignity that is in sin, which unspirits and unsouls a man, if I may be allowed such expressions. A sinner is called a carnal man, a man made up of nothing but a lump of dull flesh kneaded together without spirit. And therefore the apostle, Rom. 8:13 does not bid men mortify the deeds of their souls, but of their bodies, because wicked men act as if they had no souls, or at least not so noble a soul as the rational one is.

2. It denotes what it is that sin tends unto. It is only to please and gratify the flesh; to pamper the body, that sensual, sordid, and baser part of man. The soul of the natural man acts for no higher end than the soul of a beast. The soul of a beast acts not for itself, but is made a drudge and underling to the body. It serves only to carry the body up and down to its pasture, and make it to relish its food and fodder. And thus it is with the souls of wicked men; they act not for themselves, but are only provisors for the body, that seek out and lay in provision for the flesh. Hence we have that exhortation, Rom. 13:14. 'Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.'

3. Though the soul be the chief seat of the flesh, yet the flesh is the great instrument by which it acts, Rom. 6:19. Hence its actions are called 'the deeds of the body,' Rom. 8:13. Though some sins are seated in the mind, as heresies, covetousness, malice, pride, &c. yet

they are set down among the works of the flesh in the apostle's catalogue, Gal. 5:19, 20. And as to the sins of omission, they usually take their rise in men from some inordinate sensual affection to the creature, which causes them to omit their duty to God, but, generally speaking, most sins are acted by the flesh. When the devil would set up a kingdom in the hearts of men, he doth it by the flesh; for what is nearer and dearer to us than our flesh? and things pleasant and grateful to the flesh strongly promote his designs. These darken and blind their minds, corrupt their hearts, and entice and allure their affections; so that they hunt after them with an eager pursuit, to the woful neglect of God and their precious souls.

4. The disorder of the sensitive appetite, which inclines men to the interest and conveniences of the flesh, is the great cause of all sin; and therefore fallen man is represented in scripture as wholly governed by his sensual inclinations, Gen. 6:3. John 3:6 as if he had nothing in him but what is earthly and carnal. Our souls cleave so fast to the earth in our degenerate state, and are so much addicted to the body, that they have lost their primitive excellence and beauty. Our understanding, will, and affections, are wofully distempered by our senses, and enslaved to the flesh. So that with great propriety corrupt nature is called flesh in scripture.

1. This corruption is most truly and properly sin, even in the regenerate, where the guilt of it is removed by the blood of Christ, and the power of it subdued by his Spirit and grace. And all the motions thereof in them are sin; as appears from what the apostle says, Rom. 7:5, 7, 8. 'For when we are in the flesh, the motions of sins which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.' Gal. 5:17. 'For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.'

2. This corruption is exceeding sinful. For the law and covenant of works made with Adam, as the head and representative of all his posterity, required perfect obedience and conformity to God both in heart and life, to love the Lord his God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind. God placed him in a holy and happy state, endued him with his image, consisting in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness; and gave him sufficient power and ability to perform the duty he owed to his Lord, and to continue in the course of obedience, till he should be confirmed both in holiness and felicity. Now, man having by sin stript himself of the image of God, and rendered himself incapable of obeying God either in heart or life, the law still requires all the holiness and righteousness that it did when he was in his upright estate; and the want of conformity to the law of God must be exceeding sinful, as a breach of the law of God, and a trampling on his image. And, in order to affect us with a deep sense of the sinfulness of the total corruption of our nature, let us consider,

(1.) The pregnancy of this corruption. It is indeed all sin virtually, which is retailed out in many particular sinful acts. It contains in its bowels the seed and spawn of all wickedness whatsoever. All treasons and disobedience, rebellions and hostilities, against the supreme and sovereign majesty of heaven, are to be found in it. It is the nursery, seed, and womb, yea, every sin that is possible to be committed is in this womb, so conceived and formed, animated and brought to the birth, as there needs nothing but a temptation and opportunity to bring it forth. It may be you never imbrued your hands in your brother's blood, as Cain did, nor have actually committed murder, yet the seed and spawn of it is lurking in thy heart; and the only reason why you have kept free from it is, because God hath restrained and kept thee back, and hath not suffered the like temptations and occasions to come in thy way. It may be you never set cities on fire, dashed out children's brains, ript up women with child, as Hazael did; yet all these sins are lurking in thy heart, though they were never acted by thine hands. Hazael was angry when the prophet told him so much, 2 Kings 8:12, 13 but he acted all that

afterwards and more, when he was advanced to his master's throne. He could not think that ever he could be guilty of such atrocious and detestable crimes, unless he were transformed into a dog. He was little acquainted with the desperate wickedness of man's nature, which habitually inclines him to the most barbarous and bloody cruelty.

(2.) This corruption that lies in the heart is the woful cause, source, and spring of all the actual transgressions which stain men's lives. Every wicked and sinful action derives its descent from this. From whence come murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, &c? Our Saviour tells us, Matt. 15:19. They proceed out of the heart. If you will trace these streams to the true spring and fountain, you will find it to be the sin and wickedness of the heart. This is that seed and loathsome spawn to which all this detestable vermin owe their original. It is fruitful and productive of all manner of evils. It is that which fills people's mouths with cursing, swearing, lying, slandering, &c. makes their feet swift to shed blood, and puts the poison of asps under their tongue, Rom. 3:14, 15. Yea, this defiles the whole man, and stains him with an universal pollution, Matth. 15:18. As a lethargy in the head, or an indisposition in the stomach, diffuseth an universal malignity through the whole body, these being sovereign and principal parts in man; so this wickedness that dwells in the heart, poisons the whole life. Many a filthy and impure stream issues from this corrupt fountain.

(3.) Consider what a monstrous deformity it hath brought on the soul. The mind of man was the candle of the Lord. As it proceeded from God it was a lightsome beam, shining with more lustre and splendour than a ray of the sun. But now it is dark and obscure, and is become a stinking and noisome dunghill. It was once one of the brightest and most excellent pieces of the creation, next unto the angelical nature; but by sin it is transformed into an ugly monster. We justly reckon that birth monstrous, where the members have not their due place; when the head is where the feet should be, or the legs in place of the arms, &c. Thus the noble powers and faculties of the

soul are monstrously misplaced. That which should be highest is now lowest; that which should rule and keep the throne, is brought into a miserable subjection and bondage: that which should serve and obey, does now tyrannise and command. Passion over-rules reason, and the will receives laws from the fancy and appetite. In man's primitive state, the will was sovereign lord, reason was its counsellor, and appetite subject to both; but now it hath aspired and got above them, and oftentimes carries both into a servile compliance with the dictates of sense. Any spot or blemish upon the face of a beautiful child, when it comes but accidentally, grieves and afflicts the parents: how much more cause have we to bemoan the natural, universal, and monstrous deformity which has seized upon our souls?

(4.) Consider the devilishness of this corruption. There is nothing in all the world hath so much of the devil in it as sin. It is his first-born, the beginning of his strength; that which he hatched and brought into the world. It is his work and employment, his great masterpiece, that wherein he applauds himself and glories, John 8:44. This is his image that he hath drawn upon man. Those black characters which are drawn on the soul, are of Satan's impression. As face answers to face, so doth man's corrupt nature answer the nature of the devil. It hath all the essential parts of the diabolical nature. There is in it a strong aversion from all that is good, so is there in him; and a mighty propensity to all evil, so is it in the devil. It is Satan's correspondent, that maintains secret and constant intercourse with our mortal enemy. It is a domestic enemy, ready on all occasions to betray the soul into the hands of him, who is always going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. O, should it not deeply humble us before God, that we are so near a kin to hell, and have such a correspondence with the devil; that our corruption makes us so like unto him, and daily affords him so great an advantage against us?

(5.) Consider the brutishness of this corruption. Sin hurries the soul on with a blind rage and fury to such acts and motions, as men in their right reason would highly condemn. It is on this account that

men are compared to brute-beasts and irrational creatures: as to the horse and the mule, to a wild ass, an untamed hieffer, &c. The brute-creatures, though they be not capable to know God, yet they will know and take some notice of their benefactor, and such as feed and keep them. But men kick against God, they wound Christ, and reject and expel the Holy Spirit in his motions and operations. They bellow out reproaches against his servants, whom he hath sent forth to feed and nourish their souls, Prov. 12:1. The brutal creatures have a strong inclination to those things which tend to their health, and to the preservation and continuance of their life and strength; but sin makes men averse to their own happiness, and all the spiritual means which have a tendency thereunto. The beasts are afraid of that which is hurtful and destructive to their being: but sin pushes men on in the ways of death; and the paths which lead to eternal destruction. It is said, Job 11:12 that 'man is born like a wild ass's colt.' He brings with him into the world a heart more wild, fierce, and untamed than any beast of the field.

(6.) Consider its vileness. There is nothing in the whole creation so detestable as sin. It is the abominable thing which the Lord hates. He cannot look upon it but with infinite abhorrence. There is nothing so base and so contemptible as sin. The scripture sets it forth under various notions, no single one being sufficient to express its vileness. It is called flesh, Gen. 6:3 and Gal. 5:16, 17. This holds forth the vile degeneracy of man's soul since this corruption seized upon it. By creation it was pure and holy, heavenly and spiritual, near a-kin to the angels, yea, as like to the nature of God as a creature could be: but now it is transformed into flesh, made carnal, sensual, and devilish. It is vile both formally and effectively: filthy in itself, and hath made the whole man so. It is compared in scripture to those things which are most vile and detestable in the eyes of men, as filthy vomit, defiling mire, rotten members, putrifying sores, &c.

(7.) It excludes and debars from access to God and communion with him. There can be no friendship between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial, between an infinitely pure and holy God,

and vile filthy polluted sinners. We have an important question proposed, Psal. 24:3. 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?' The answer is given, ver. 4. 'He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart: who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.' And we are told, Psal. 5:4, 5. 'Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' The heart is the temple of God, the chief place of his residence in man; and he will never dwell in it, unless it be made clean. There is no access to God here or hereafter without holiness, James 4:8. Rev. 21 ult.

(8.) Lastly, It exposeth to terrible wrath. It was sin that brought the deluge upon the old world: and it hath brought many fearful plagues and judgments upon the new one since. And it is this that lays men open to the wrath and vengeance of God in the life that is to come. Hence they are called 'children of wrath,' Eph. 2:3. They are born to wrath by nature. This is their portion and inheritance. 'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven (says the apostle) against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The curses and threatenings of the law proclaim the divine displeasure, and give warnings and intimations to sinners of what they are to expect. There is a day of wrath coming, and of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, when the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. We are exposed to wrath on account of sin, in our conception, birth, life, and death, and through all eternity.

In the above three things, the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of the whole nature, consists in original sin. These three things make up this monstrous body. There lies our sinfulness which we are brought into by the fall.

How this corruption is conveyed to all the children of men, the scripture, even the text, makes it plain, that it is conveyed by natural generation, so as all that proceed from Adam in the way of natural generation are infected with it. But if it be asked, how this original

corruption is propagated from parents to children? how it comes to pass that our souls are defiled and tainted with original sin? Indeed the question is very hard and difficult. It may be this is one of those mysteries which are reserved for the world to come, about which we cannot in our present state solve every difficulty that may be moved. It is much more our duty and interest to be solicitous how to get sin out of our souls, than to pry and search into the way how it came into them. However, this is certain, that God doth not infuse it. Souls receive neither purity nor impurity from him, but only their naked essence, and the natural powers and properties flowing therefrom. He doth not infuse any impurity into men; for he cannot be the author of sin, who is the revenger of it. Nor doth he create men's souls in their original purity and rectitude; for the sin of Adam lost that, and God's justice withholds it from his posterity. As a pure and holy God, he cannot infuse any impurity into the souls of men; and as a just and righteous God, he may and doth withhold from, or create them void and destitute of, that holiness and righteousness which was once their happiness and glory. Again, it is probably thought by some, that original sin comes neither in by the soul alone, nor by the body alone, apart from the soul, but upon the union and conjunction of both in one person. It is the union of these two that constitutes a child of Adam, and as such only we are capable of being infected with his sin.

Solid divines, without a daring intrusion into unrevealed secrets, proceed by the following steps in answering this question.

1. If it be demanded, How it comes to pass that an infant becomes guilty of Adam's sin? the answer is, Because he is a child of Adam by natural generation.
2. But why is he deprived of that original rectitude with which Adam was created? they answer, Because Adam lost it by his sin, and therefore could not transmit to his posterity what he had lost.

3. But how comes he to be inclined to that which is evil? the answer is, Because he wants that original rectitude, which Adam had when he was created. For whosoever wants original righteousness, inclines naturally to that which is evil. And so the propension of nature to that which is bad, seems to be by way of concomitancy with the want of original righteousness. No action can be holy which doth not flow from the image of God in the soul, as its root and principle. And therefore man being despoiled of this image of God, there is no action of any man in a state of nature but what is sinful and corrupt. But, as I said before, it much more concerns us how to get original corruption removed, than to inquire how it came in.

This corruption may well be called original sin, because we have it from our original, it being as old as ourselves; and because it is transmitted from Adam, the origin of mankind; and, which is the

Last thing, because all actual transgressions proceed from it, Matt. 15:19.; as I have already shewn.

I shall shut up this point with a few inferences.

1. No wonder then that we are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward; that we are attacked and made prisoners as soon as we come into the world. This says that the straight way in the course of justice would be, that we go from the womb to the grave, and that the cradle be turned into a coffin. For, in a spiritual sense, we are all dead born; and no wonder that natural death should seize those that are spiritually dead; and that all sorts of miseries should pursue those that are destitute of every thing that is good.

2. There is no ground for parents to be lifted up on the account of children, however numerous and fair. For though they may have fair faces, they have foul and deformed souls by nature; and natural beauty is far outbalanced by spiritual ugliness. Parents had much need to carry them by faith and prayer to the fountain of Christ's

blood, to get them washed and purified from their spiritual uncleanness.

3. This doctrine lets us see the absolute necessity of Christ as a Saviour, who alone is able to save us from the guilt of sin by his blood, and from the filth and pollution of it by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, and from the dominion of it by the power of divine grace. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,' John 3:3.

4. Lastly, See the absolute necessity of mortification, of crucifying the flesh; for from it all actual sins proceed. A form of godliness will not do. No; we must strike at the root, otherwise the branches will never die. The consideration of the total corruption and depravation of our nature should make us all lie low in the dust before a holy God, watchful against every motion and temptation to sin, restless till we be delivered from it, and indefatigable in the course of the Christian warfare. And it calls every one to mourning and lamenting over the ruins of our nature, and to supplicating the God of all grace, that he may cleanse our polluted souls, and wash us from our sins in the blood of Jesus.

OF THE MISERY OF MAN'S NATURAL STATE

ROM. 5:12.—By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

THESE words teach us a lesson that all the books of philosophers could never do. They were sensible of the depravity and misery of human nature; but how was it depraved, and what was the spring of all the troubles the life of man is exposed to, they were utterly

ignorant. We all see a flood of misery let into the world; but what way the sluice was opened, we can only learn from divine revelation. And in this passage we have it, viz. By one man sin entered into the world, and misery followed it close at the heels. This one man was Adam, the natural root, and the federal head of all mankind, ver. 14. In the words we have,

1. A flood of misery passing over the world, Death passed upon all men. For understanding this, ye must compare it with Gen. 2:17. 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' This awful threatening is marked to be accomplished here. Death there implies loss of communion with God, which was evident in the fulfilling of the threatening, Gen. 3:24 when God drove out the man, viz. from paradise, and placed a heavenly guard to prevent man's access to the tree of life. It also implies a being under God's wrath and curse, as the threatening imports. This is spiritual death. It further implies temporal death, a liableness to the miseries of this life and to death itself, Gen. 3:16–19.; and also eternal death; which appears from man's being excluded paradise and the tree of life, ver. 22. This threatened death, says the apostle, passed upon all men, 'It is appointed unto all men once to die.' viz. a natural death. There is no discharge in this war. All men are spiritually dead, dead to God and happiness. And they are all subject to eternal death, in the separation of both soul and body from God and the felicity of the other world.

2. How the sluice by which this misery has overflowed the world was opened. (1.) The personal cause was one man, viz. Adam. (2.) The real cause was his sin, the sin of eating the forbidden fruit. This sin was the sin of all: for all (viz. on whom death passed) have sinned, not in their own persons, for infants on whom death has passed, have not so sinned; but have therefore sinned in Adam. And this sin of the first man is the cause of all the misery that has overtaken the human race.

The text affords the following doctrine.

DOCT. 'All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. That all mankind are made miserable.

II. That this misery came by their fall in Adam.

III. What that misery is that hath by the fall overtaken all mankind.

IV. Deduce some inferences for application.

I. That mankind, and all mankind, are made miserable, needs no laborious proof. Sad experience in all ages confirms the truth of this assertion. Troops of misery receive us as soon as we come into the world, whereof some one or other always accompany us till we be laid in the grave. Let men be clothed in rags, or wear a crown, the garment common to all is misery. Every sigh, tear, or sorrowful look, is a proof of this.

II. That this misery came upon men by the fall, is also clear from the text. Man came not out of God's hand with the tear in his eye, or sorrow in his heart, or a burden on his back. He never put on his dole-weed or mourning garment, till he had by sin made himself naked. Death never could enter the gates of the world, till sin set them wide open, Gen. 3. And then one sin let in the flood; and many sins followed and increased it. The first pilot dashed the ship on a rock, and then all that were in it were cast into a sea of misery. Our first parents fell, and we being in them felt with them the sad and mournful effects of their fall.

III. I proceed to shew what that misery is which hath by the fall overtaken all mankind. It may be taken up in these three things.

1. Man's loss by the fall.

2. What he is brought under by it.

3. What he is liable to in consequence of it.

FIRST, Let us view man's loss by the fall. He has lost communion with God. He enjoyed it before that fatal period; but now it is gone. It implies two things. 1. A saving interest in God as his God. Man could then call God his own God, his Maker, his Husband, his Friend, his Portion, being in covenant with him. 2. Sweet and comfortable society and fellowship with God: and all this without a mediator, God and man not having been enemies or at variance. This sweet and agreeable communion he lost, as appears from Gen. 3:8 where it is said, 'They (our first parents) heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.' When God spoke to him before, it was refreshing and comfortable to him; but now it was a terror to him; evidently shewing that all correspondence was broke up.

Thus man lost God, Eph. 2:12 the greatest and the fountain of all other losses. He is no more the God of fallen men, till by a new covenant they get a new interest in him. This is the greatest of all losses and miseries. Had the sun been for ever darkened in the heavens, it had been no such loss as this. God is the cause and fountain of all good; and the loss of him must be the loss of every thing that is good and excellent. Man is a mere nothing without God; a nothing in nature without his common presence, and a nothing in happiness without his gracious presence, Psal. 30:5. 'In his favour is life.' Psal. 63:3. 'Thy loving-kindness is better than life.' That day man fell, the foundation of the earth was drawn away, and all fell down together; the soul and the life departed from all men, and left them all dead, having lost God, the fountain of life and joy. Hence we may infer,

1. Man is a slave to the devil, 2 Tim. 2:26. When the soul is gone, men may do with the body what they will; and when God is gone, the

devil may do with the soul what he will. Man without God is like Samson without his hair, quite weak and unable to resist his spiritual enemies, as Samson to oppose the Philistines. Satan has over men in nature the power of a master, Rom. 6:16 so that when he bids them go, they go; and when to come, they come;—that of a conqueror, and so he makes them his slaves and vassals;—and that of a jailor, keeping them fast bound in chains, so that they cannot escape from his clutches, Isa. 61:1.

2. Man has lost his covenant-right to the creatures which he had when in favour with his Maker; and therefore Adam was driven out of paradise. Men have no right to the creatures, or their service now, but that of common providence, until it be otherwise restored by their coming into the bond of the new covenant.

3. Hence man is in a fruitless search after happiness in the creatures, set, as a poor infant that hath lost the breasts, to suck at the dry breasts of the creatures, where nothing is to be met with but continued disappointments.

4. Man cannot help himself, John 15:5. His help is alone in God in Christ, without whom one can do nothing. He is like a poor infant exposed, that cannot help itself, Ezek. 16. He is like one grievously wounded, who can neither make a plaster for his wounds nor apply it. Ah! how miserable is the case of man under the fall!

SECONDLY, Let us consider what man is brought under by the fall.

1. He is brought under God's wrath. Hence sinners are said to be 'the children of wrath,' Eph. 2:3. Wrath in God is mixed with no perturbation, but is pure from all discomposure. It imports,

(1.) That sinners are under the displeasure of God. He can take no delight in them, but his soul loaths them. There is a holy fire of anger burning in his breast against them. Should the sun be continually under a cloud, and the heavens ever covered with blackness, what a miserable place would the world be? But that is nothing to the divine

anger: 'Who knows the power of thine anger?' says the Psalmist, Psal. 90:11.

(2.) God deals with them as with enemies, Nah. 1:2. 'God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious, the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries; and he reserveth wrath for his enemies,' Isa. 1:24.—'Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.' To have men in power enemies to us, is sad; but to have God an enemy, is beyond expression dreadful: seeing we can neither fight nor flee from him, and he can pursue the quarrel through all eternity.

2. They are under his curse, Gal. 3:10. 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.' Now, God's curse is the binding over the sinner to all the direful effects of his wrath. This is the dreadful yoke which the broken law wreaths about the neck of every sinner as in a natural state. God's curse is a tying of the sinner to the stake, that the law and justice of God may disburden all their arrows into his soul, and that in him may meet all the miseries and plagues that flow from the avenging wrath of God.

Thus every sinner, while in a natural state, is under the wrath and curse of God; a burden on him, that if not removed by him who was made under the law, and bore the curse thereof, will sink sinners into the lowest pit of hell.

THIRDLY, Let us next consider what man is liable to, both in this world and that which is to come.

First, In this world, he is liable.

1. To all the miseries of this life. Now these are twofold.

1st, Outward miseries. There is a flood of these that man is subject to; as,

(1.) God's curse upon the creature for our sake, Gen. 3:17. 'Cursed is the ground for thy sake,' Under the weight of this curse the whole creation groans and travails in pain, longing for deliverance. It is not the groan of a wearied beast desiring to be disburdened of its load, but a groan the effect of the fall of man. The treason and rebellion of man against his rightful Lord and Sovereign, brought distress and misery upon all that was formed for his use; as when the majesty of a prince is violated by the rebellion of his subjects, all that belongs to them, and was before the free gift of the prince, is forfeited and taken from them. Their lands, palaces, cattle, even all that pertains to them, bear the marks of his sovereign fury. Consult Deut. 28:15, &c.

(2.) Outward miseries, such as sword, famine, and pestilence. Many times the curse of the Lord makes the heavens as brass, and the earth as iron, binds up the clouds, and restrains their necessary influences, so that the fruits of the earth are dried up. It raises divisions, wars, and mutinies in a kingdom. All the confusions and disorders which are to be seen among men, are the woful fruits and native results of sin. It kindles and blows up the fire of discord in families, cities, and nations. This is that fury that brings a smoking fire-brand from hell, and sets the whole world in a combustion. Pride and ambition, covetousness and desire of revenge, have made the world a stage of the most bloody tragedies. We have some terrible threatenings with respect to these judgments, Deut. 28 Lev. 26. And they are all summed up in one verse, Ezek. 5:17. 'I will send upon you famine, and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee, and and I will bring the sword upon thee: I the Lord have spoken it.'

(3.) Miseries on men's bodies, sickness and bodily pains, as burning fevers, languishing consumptions, distorting convulsions, ugly deformities, gout and gravel, and all the dismal train of wasting diseases and acute pains. Sin hath made man's body a seminary of diseases, and planted in it the fatal seeds and principles of corruption and dissolution, and made him liable to attacks from all distempers, from the torturing stone to the wasting consumption.

(4.) On our estates, as losses, crosses, wrongs, and oppressions. How often do those in trade suffer heavy losses by the bankruptcies of their debtors, by unfair practices, and sinistrous dealings, by cheating and tricking, by extortion and rapine, &c?

(5.) On our names, by reproach, disgrace, &c. Many estates are blasted, and families reduced to poverty and contempt, which sometime have made a good figure in the world. People are made to groan under pinching straits and wants, and yet they seldom consider the bitter root from whence all this springs. It is sin that makes men poor, mean, low, and contemptible in the world, and that brings reproach and disgrace upon their names, Deut. 28:37.

(6.) On our employments and callings. These are many times full of pain, labour, and disappointments. Men earn wages, and put it into a bag with holes, and they disquiet and vex themselves in vain. "Whence are our cares and fears but from sin? Fear is the ague of the soul that sets it a shaking. Some fear want, and others alarms. Whence come all the disappointments of our hopes and expectations but from sin? When we look for comfort, there is a cross; where we expect honey and sweetness, there we find wormwood and gall.

(7.) On our relations, unequal uncomfortable marriages, false and treacherous friends, harsh and cruel masters, undutiful and unfaithful servants. It is sin that makes children ungrateful and undutiful to parents: they that should be as the staff of their parents' old age, are as a sword many times to pierce their hearts. It is sin that makes wives disobedient to their husbands, and to defile their beds.

2dly, Inward spiritual miseries: As (1.) 'Blindness of mind,' Eph. 4:13 the devil putting out the eyes that would not receive the light of the gospel, 1 Cor. 4:4. (2.) 'A reprobate sense,' Rom. 1:28 whereby men are left of God so as to have no sense of discerning betwixt good and evil, but take bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. (3.) 'Strong delusions,' 2 Thess. 2:11 whereby men, forsaking the truth, doat on the fancies and imaginations of their own hearts, and embrace lies

for solid truths. (4.) 'Hardness of heart,' Rom. 2:5 whereby men's hearts are hardened from the fear of the Lord, and proof against conviction, and means used for awakening them. (5.) 'Vile affections,' Rom. 1:26 eagerly desiring sin and vanity, and all manner of filthiness, without regard to the dictates of reason and a natural conscience. (6.) Lastly, Fear, sorrow, and horror of conscience, which torment men, embitter life, and often bring death in their train, Isaiah 33:14.

2. At the end of this life, man is liable to death, Rom. 6:23. 'The wages of sin is death.' The soul must be separated from the body; the man falls into the hands of the king of terrors, and goes down to the house appointed for all living.

Object. But if these things be the effects of the fall, how comes it that those who are delivered from the curse of the law and the wrath of God by Jesus Christ, sustain these outward miseries, and die as well as others? Ans. Because the delivery is but imperfect; but when they shall be free from sin, they shall be free from all these. In the meantime there is a great difference betwixt them: for the sting of God's wrath as a judge is taken out of them to the godly, and they are not accomplishments of the threatenings of the covenant of works, Rom. 6:14 but of those of the covenant of grace, Psal. 89:31, 32, 33 and why may not the Lord take some of those things threatened under the covenant of works, and give them a gospel-die, and inflict them according to the second covenant, as well as he does with the commands, which they are still obliged to obey?

Secondly, Let us consider what man is liable to in the world to come. He is liable to the pains of hell for ever. There the Jordan of wrath will overflow all its banks, and that throughout eternal ages. These pains of hell consist in two things, the punishment of loss, and the punishment of sense.

1. In the punishment of loss. This is unspeakably great, and cannot be sufficiently set forth by the tongue of man. I shall only glance at it

a little, without enlarging on particulars. (1.) They will lose all the good things which they enjoyed here in the world, their wealth, their riches, their profits and pleasures, and whatever things they set their heart on while here. (2.) The favourable presence and enjoyment of God and Christ. They will be for ever banished from the beatific vision of God in glory. For he will say to them at the last day, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,' Matth. 25:41. (3.) The blessed company and society of the holy angels and glorified saints in heaven. (4.) All the glory and blessedness above. (5.) All pity and compassion, having none to commiserate, their condition, or regard their pain. (6.) All hope and expectation of deliverance and outgate from their misery. (7.) All possibility of deliverance from their torments. The door of the pit shall be shut upon them for ever, and their fetters shall never be loosed. Thus sinners in hell shall lose every thing that is good and agreeable, even God the chief good, and all the happiness he has prepared for them that love him.

2. In the punishment of sense. They shall suffer the most grievous torments both in soul and body, and that without intermission, for evermore. These torments are beyond expression, and our most fearful thoughts cannot equal the horror of them. 'Who knows the power of thine anger?' says the Psalmist. No man can tell what those plagues and woes are which infinite justice and almighty power hath prepared for obstinate sinners. O that we may be prevailed upon to flee from this wrath that is to come, that so we may not fall into the hands of the living God, and may not be made the dreadful objects of everlasting vengeance.

I conclude with a few inferences.

1. See here the great evil of sin. Many reckon it but a small matter to transgress God's holy and righteous law. They can curse and swear, lie and steal, and commit many other enormous crimes, and yet have no trouble or remorse about it. But if they would consider the dreadful effects of sin, they would be of another mind. Sin is the

worst of evils, and big with all kinds of evils whatsoever. It has brought a flood of miseries into the world, which has overflowed the whole creation, under the weight of which the earth and all its inhabitants are groaning. It is the great makebate between God and sinners; it has shut the door of access to God upon us, and exposed us to his wrath and curse in this life and that which is to come.

2. Woful is the case of all who are in a state of nature. They are far from God; they have no interest in or fellowship with him; they are under his wrath and curse, liable to all the miseries of this life, and to the vengeance of eternal fire in the world to come. They are fallen under the power and tyranny of the devil, and if mercy prevent not, shall dwell with him in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever. Whatever your situation and circumstances in the world may be, O ye that are yet in your natural state, ye are in a miserable condition; for ye are without God, the fountain of all good. Ye may read, pray, and communicate, but ye can have no communion with God. Men may be pleased with and bless you; but ye are under God's wrath and curse; and will continue so till ye by faith embrace God in Christ as your God.

3. Lastly, Arise, O ye sinners who are yet in your natural state, and depart; for this is not your rest. Come to the Lord Jesus, who alone can open the door of access to God, whose blood quenches the fire of wrath, and who can deliver from the curse of the law. Who would stay in a house ready to fall? who can sleep sound in a case where God is an enemy? Lay these things seriously to heart, and flee from the wrath ye lie under, for the plague is begun already; and speedily flee from the wrath to come: for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

OF ELECTION TO EVERLASTING LIFE

EPH. 1:3, 4, 5.—Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

THE answer to the question, 'Did God leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?' contains two heads of doctrine of great importance in the Christian system, viz. the doctrine of election, and the covenant of grace, each of which I shall speak to distinctly. I shall discourse of the first from the text now read. In which we have,

1. A party brought out of their natural state into a state of salvation, ver. 3.—Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. For whereas by nature they were under the curse, now they are blessed, and that plentifully, with all blessings, not temporal only, but spiritual and heavenly, coming from heaven, and to be consummated there.

2. The person by whom they are brought into this state. It is by the Redeemer, as the purchaser. God the Father bestows them, as the Father of Christ, viz. for his sake. And they are blessed in Christ, upon account of his merit, and coming from him as their Head.

3. Who those are whom God brings out of their natural state into a state of grace; the elect, ver. 4, 5. According as he hath chosen us in him, &c. Where consider,

- (1.) Election itself, he hath chosen us, separated us from others in his purpose and decree, selected us from among the rest of mankind, whom he passed by and left to perish in their natural state.

(2.) That to which they are elected: that is, to salvation, and the means leading thereto. The means are, sanctification, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; and adoption, ver. 5 that whereas they are by nature children of the devil, they should be children of God. The end is everlasting life in heaven; for that is imported in adoption, Rom. 8:23 as the inheritance of the children of God.

(3.) Through whom this decree is to be executed, in him; that is, Christ, whom the Father chose to be the head of the elect, through whom he would save them.

(4.) When God elected them, before the foundation of the world, ere they were created; that is, from eternity; as appears from what our Lord says to his Father, John 17:24. 'Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world;' which can denote nothing else than from eternity.

(5.) That which moved him to elect them, according to the good pleasure of his will; that is, his mere good pleasure, so he would do it; and there was nothing without himself to move him thereto.

The words afford a foundation for the following doctrine.

DOCT. 'God left not all mankind to perish in the state of sin and 'misery, but having from all eternity elected some to everlasting life, brings them into a state of salvation by a Redeemer.'

In illustrating this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What election is.

II. Who are elected.

III. What they are chosen to.

IV. The properties of this election.

V. That all the elect, and only they, are in time brought out of a state of sin and misery into a state of salvation.

VI. By whom they are saved.

VII. Lastly, Conclude with some improvement.

I. Our first business is, to shew what election is. It is that decree of God whereby some men are chosen out from among the rest of mankind, and appointed to obtain eternal life by Jesus Christ, flowing from the mere good pleasure of God; as appears from the text. So the elect are they whom God has chosen to everlasting life, Acts 13:48. God seeing all mankind lost in Adam from all eternity, in his decree separated some from among them, to be redeemed by his Son, sanctified by his Spirit, and brought to glory.

II. I proceed to shew who are elected. Who they are in particular, God only knows; but in general we say,

That it is not all men, but some only. For where all are taken, there is no choice made. To say that God has made choice, plainly imports that others are not chosen, but passed by. And so there is another party of men who are reprobated; that is, whom God has not chosen to life, but has decreed to let them lie in their natural state, and to damn them for their sins, Jude 4; whom he shews not saving mercy unto, but hardens, they first hardening themselves, Rom. 9:18. Here is no injustice in God, seeing he might have left all to perish as well as some. This is also clear from plain scripture, Mat. 20:16. 'Many are called, but few chosen.' Whence also it is plain, that the elect are the lesser number of the world, Mat. 7:13, 14. 'Enter ye in at the strait gate (says Christ); for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' They are a little flock, Luke 12:32. Yet the efficacy of the Lord's love and Christ's death is more and greater than that of Adam's sin, seeing it is greater to save one soul

than to ruin all. And further, the scripture teaches, that though God has his own of all sorts, yet this blessed company, God does not make up, chiefly of the highest and most honourable among men. 1 Cor. 1:26, 27, 28. 'Ye see your calling; how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are pot, to bring to nought things that are.'

III. The next head is, to shew what they are chosen to.

1. They are chosen to be partakers of everlasting life. Hence the scripture speaks of some being 'ordained to eternal life,' Acts 13:48 and of 'appointing them to obtain salvation,' 1 Thess. 5:9. God appoints some to be rich, great, and honourable, some to be low and mean in the world; and others to be in a middle station, objects neither of envy nor contempt; but electing love appoints those on whom it falls to be saved from sin, and all the ruins of the fall; its great view is to eternal glory in heaven. To this they were appointed before they had a being.

2. They are chosen also to grace as the mean, as well as to glory as the end. God's predestinating them to eternal blessedness includes both, as in the text; and it further appears from 2 Thess. 2:13. 'God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.' Hence faith is held out as a certain consequent of election, Acts 13:48. 'As many as were ordained unto eternal life, believed.' The man who intends to dwell in a house yet unbuilt, intends also the means by which it may be made a fit habitation. So God having from eternity pitched on a select number of the ruined race of mankind as objects of his love, and having predestinated them to everlasting life, intended also the means necessary and proper for obtaining that glorious end. And therefore there is no ground from the decree of election to slight the

means of salvation. God has so joined the end and the means, that none can put them asunder.

IV. Let us consider the properties of election.

1. It is altogether free, without any moving cause, but God's mere good pleasure. No reason can be found for this but only in the bosom of God. There is nothing before, or above, or without his purpose, that can be pitched upon as the cause of all that grace and goodness that he bestows upon his chosen ones. There was no merit or motive in them, as Christ told his disciples, John 15:16. 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' His choice is antecedent to ours. The persons who are singled out to be the objects of his special grace, were a part of lost mankind, the same by nature with others who were passed by, and left to perish in their sin. When God had all Adam's numerous progeny under the view of his all-seeing eye, he chose some, and passed by others. He found nothing in the creature to cast the balance of his choice, or to determine it to one more than another. Those that were rejected were as eligible as those that were chosen. They were all his creatures, and all alike obnoxious to his wrath by sin. It was grace alone that made the difference. So the prophet argues, 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 I hated Esau.' And this is abundantly clear in the text. Why doth God write some men's names in the book of life, and leave out others? why doth he enrol some whom he intends to make citizens of Zion, and heirs of immortal glory, and refuse to put others in his register? The text tells us, it is the good pleasure of his will.

You may, says an eminent divine, render a reason for many of God's actions, till you come to this, which is the top and foundation of all; and this act can be reduced to no other head of reason, but to that of his royal prerogative. If you inquire, why doth God save some, and condemn others at last? the reason is, because of the faith of the one, and the unbelief of the other. But why do some men believe? It is

because God hath not only given them the means of grace, but accompanied these means with the power and efficacy of the Spirit. But why did God accompany these means with the efficacy of his Spirit in some, and not in others? It is because he decreed by his grace to prepare them for glory. But why did he decree and chuse some to glory, and not others? Into what can you resolve this, but only into his sovereign pleasure? Salvation and damnation at the last upshot are acts of God as the righteous Judge and Governor of the world, giving life and eternal happiness to believers, and inflicting death and eternal misery upon unbelievers, conformable to his own law. Men may render a reason for these proceedings. But the choice of some and the preterition of others, is an act of God as he is a sovereign monarch, before any law was actually transgressed, because not actually given. What reason can be given for his advancing one part of matter to the noble dignity of a star, and leaving another part to make up the dark body of the earth? to compact one part into a glorious sun, and another part into a hard rock, but his royal prerogative? What is the reason that a prince subjects one malefactor to condign punishment, and lifts up another to a place of profit and trust? It is merely because he will, Rom. 9:18. Hence we may infer,

(1.) That God did not chuse men to everlasting life and happiness for any moral perfection that he saw in them; because he converts those, and changes them by his grace, who are most sinful and profligate, as the Gentiles, who were soaked in idolatry and superstition. He found more faith among the Romans, who were Pagan idolaters, than among the Jews, who were the peculiar people of God, and to whom his heavenly oracles were committed. He planted a saintship at Corinth, a place notorious for the infamous worship of Venus, a superstition attended with the grossest uncleanness; and at Ephesus, that presented the world with a cup of fornication in the temple of Diana. And what character had the Cretians from one of their own poets, mentioned by the apostle in his epistle to Titus, whom he had placed among them to further the progress of the gospel, but the vilest and most abominable liars, and not to be credited; evil beasts,

not to be associated with; slow bellies, fit for no service. Now what merit and attractive was here? What invitations could he have from lying, beastliness, and gluttony, but only from his own. sovereignty? By this he plucked firebrands out of the burning, while he left straiter and more comely sticks to consume to ashes.

(2.) God doth not chuse men to grace and glory for any civil perfection that is in them; because he calls and renews the most despicable. He doth not elevate nature to grace on account of wealth or honour, or any civil station or dignities in the world, 1 Cor. 1:26 forecited. A purple robe is very seldom decked and adorned with the jewel of grace. He takes more of the mouldy clay, than of refined dust, to cast into his image, and lodges his treasures more in the earthly vessels, than in the world's golden ones. Should God impart his grace most to those who abound in wealth and honour, it had laid a foundation for men to think, that he had been moved by those vulgarly esteemed excellencies, and to indulge them more than others. But such a conceit languisheth, and falls to the ground, when we behold the subjects of divine grace as void originally of any allurements as they are full of provocations.

(3.) Their foreseen faith and good works, or perseverance in either of them, are not the cause of election; because these are the fruits and effects, and therefore cannot be the causes of election, Rom. 8:29. Acts. 13:48. It is clear also from this text, where it is said, they are chosen to be holy, and to adoption, and therefore to faith, by which we obtain it, John. 1:12. God did not chuse and elect men to grace and glory because they were holy, or because he did foresee that they would be so, but that he might purify and make them holy. And let it be observed, that the scripture attributes election only to God's good pleasure, Rom. 9:11, 13, 16. Mat. 11:25. And indeed, if it depended on foreseen faith or good works, we should rather be said to chuse God than he to chuse us.

(4.) God did not chuse some to life and happiness, because he was under any obligation to do so. He is indebted to none, and he is

disobliged by all. He was under no tie to pity man's misery, and repair the ruins of the fall. He owes no more debt to fallen man than to fallen angels, to restore them to their first station by a superlative grace. God as a Sovereign gave laws to man, and strength sufficient to observe them. Now, what obligation is upon God to repair that strength which man hath wilfully lost, and to pull him out of that miserable pit into which he had voluntarily plunged himself? None at all. So then there was nothing in the elect more than others to move God to chuse them either to grace or glory. It was, and must be, the gracious issue and result of his sovereign will and mere good pleasure.

2. Election is eternal. They are elected from all eternity, Eph. 1:4 chosen before the foundation of the world, 2 Tim. 1:9. 'He 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.' All God's decrees are eternal, Eph. 1:11. 'We are predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. God takes no new counsels, to do which would be inconsistent with his infinite perfection. Because God is eternal, his purposes must be of equal duration with his existence. And to imagine that an infinitely wise and sovereign Being existed from eternity, without any forethought, or resolution what to do, would be to suppose him to be undetermined or unresolved, at the time of his giving being to all things. And to suppose that the divine will is capable of new determinations, is to argue him to be imperfect; which would be as much an instance of mutability in him, as for him to alter his purpose. Election to everlasting life, must therefore be eternal.

3. It is particular and definite. God has chosen a certain number of the children of men to life, whom he knows by name, so as they can neither be more nor fewer. Hence their names are said to be written in the book of life, Luke 10:20. Phil. 4:3 and others are said not to be written there, Rev. 17:8. Though they are known to none, yet God knows them all, 2 Tim. 2:19. And they are given to Christ, John 17:9.

Therefore God's decree of election is not a general decree only to save all that shall believe and persevere in the faith; for that way it might happen that none at all might be saved.

4. It is secret, or cannot be known, till God be pleased to discover it. Hence it is called 'the mystery of his will,' Eph. 1:9 as being hid in God from before the foundation of the world, and would for ever have been so, had he not discovered it in his word.

It is unchangeable. Mutability is an imperfection peculiar to creatures. As the least change in God's understanding, so as to know more or less than that hid from eternity, would be an instance of imperfection; the same must be said with respect to his holy will, which cannot be susceptible of new determinations. Though there are many changes in the external dispensations of his providence, which are the result of his will, as well as the effects of his power; yet there is no shadow of change in his purpose. No unforeseen occurrence can render it expedient for God to change his mind, nor can any higher power oblige him to do it; nor can any defect of power to accomplish his design, induce him to alter his purpose. Those who are once elected can never be reprobated. All that are elected shall most certainly be saved. None of them can be left to perish. For all the divine purposes are unchangeable, and must be fulfilled, Isa. 46:10.; and this in particular, 2 Tim. 2:19. Election is the foundation of God's house, laid by his own hand, which cannot be shaken, but stands sure; and a sealed foundation, as men seal what they will have; a seal of two parts securing it; on God's part, God loves and keeps them that are his, that they fall not away; on our part, the same God takes care that his elect depart from iniquity. It is not possible they can be totally and finally deceived, Matth. 24:24, and whom God has chosen he glorifies, Rom. 8:29, 30. When we are bid make our election sure, it is meant of certainty and assurance as to our knowledge of it, and by no means of God's purpose.

V. The next thing is to shew, that all the elect, and they only, are in time brought out of a state of sin and misery into a state of salvation.

1. All the elect are redeemed by Christ, John 10:15. 'I lay down my life for the sheep,' says he. They are all in due time, by the power of the Spirit, regenerated, converted, and brought to Christ, and get faith to lay hold on him, John 6:37. 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.' Acts 13:48. 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' Everlasting love at length breaks forth in bringing them to grace, Jer. 31:3. 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' They are all justified, adopted and sanctified, Rom. 8:30.; and all of them persevere in grace, John 17:12. 1 Pet. 1:5. And all this by virtue of their election, Tit. 2:14.

2. None other but the elect are brought into a state of salvation; none but they are redeemed, sanctified, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, John 17:9. Christ prays not for them. Those that perish were never redeemed, nor experienced a saving change passing upon them, as appears from Rom. 8:29, 30 and 1 John 2:19. God has passed them by, and suffers them to perish in their sin and guilt.

VI. I come to shew by whom the elect are saved. It is by Christ the Redeemer. Hence the apostle says, Tit. 3:4, 5, 6. 'After that 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.' There is no other way of salvation but by him, Acts 4:12. By him is all grace and glory purchased, and by his satisfaction there is a way opened for the venting of mercy with the good leave of justice. More particularly,

1. Before the elect could be delivered from that state of sin and misery into which they had brought themselves, a valuable satisfaction behoved to be given to the justice of God for the injury done by sin. It is evident from scripture, that God stood upon full satisfaction, and would not remit one sin without it. Several things plead strongly for this:

As, (1.) The infinite purity and holiness of God. There is a contrariety in sin to the holiness of his nature, which is his peculiar glory; and from thence his hatred of it doth arise, which is as essential to him as his love to himself. The infinite purity and rectitude of his nature infers the most perfect abhorrence of whatever is opposite to it. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. 5:4, 5. 'Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' God cannot but hate all the workers of iniquity, and he cannot but punish them. His holiness is not only voluntary, but by necessity of nature. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.

(2.) The justice of God pleads for a valuable satisfaction for sin. And here we are not to consider God as a private person wronged, but as the righteous Judge and Governor of the world, and the sovereign Protector of those sacred laws by which the reasonable creature is to be directed. Now, as it was most reasonable and convenient, that at the first giving of the law he should lay the strongest restraint upon man for preventing sin by the threatening of death; so it was most just and congruous, when the law was broken by man's rebellion, that the penalty should be inflicted either upon the person of the offender, according to the immediate intent of the law, or that satisfaction equivalent to the offence should be made, that the majesty and purity of God might appear in his justice. He is the Judge of all the earth, and cannot but do right.

(3.) The wisdom of God, by which he governs the rational world, admits not of a dispensation or relaxation of the threatening without a valuable satisfaction. For it is as good to have no king as no laws for government, and as good to have no law as no penalty, and as good that no penalty be annexed to the law as no execution of it. Hence, says a learned divine, It is altogether indecent, especially to the wisdom and righteousness of God, that that which provoketh the execution of the law, should procure the abrogation of it, as that should supplant and undermine the law, for the alone prevention of which the law was made. How could it be expected, that men should

fear and tremble before God, when they should find themselves more scared and hurt by his threatenings against sin?

(4.) The truth and veracity of God required a satisfaction for sin. The word had gone out of God's mouth, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;' and again it is said, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' Now, this sentence was immutable, and the word that had gone out of his mouth must stand. Had God violated his truth by dispensing with the punishment threatened, he had rendered himself an unfit object of trust; he had exposed all the promises or threatening which he should have made after man's impunity, to the mockery and contempt of the offender, and excluded his word from any credit with man for the future. And therefore God's word could not fall to the ground without an accomplishment. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall stand firm. He will be true to his threatenings, though thousands and millions should perish.

2. As satisfaction to justice was necessary, and that which God insisted upon, so the elect could not give it themselves, neither was there any creature in heaven and earth that could do it for them. Heaven and earth were at an infinite loss to find out a ransom for their souls. We may apply to this purpose what we have, Isa. 63:5. 'I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold.' This is the desperate and forlorn condition of the elect by nature as well as others.

3. God pitched upon Christ in his infinite grace and wisdom as the fittest person for managing this grand design. Hence it is said, 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty.' And the apostle saith, he 'hath set him forth to be a propitiation for sin.' On this account he is called 'his servant whom he hath chosen, and his elect in whom his soul delighteth.' God speaks to them, as Job 33:24. 'Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.'

4. Christ accepted the office of a Redeemer, and engaged to make his soul an offering for sin. He cheerfully undertook this work in that eternal transaction that was between the Father and him. He was content to stand in the elect's room, and to submit himself to the terrible strokes of vindictive justice. He is brought in by the Psalmist offering himself as a Surety in their stead, Psal. 40:6, 7. 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, &c. Then said I, Lo, I come,' &c. He willingly yielded to all the conditions requisite for the accomplishment of our redemption. He was content to take a body, that he might be capable to suffer. The debt could not be paid, nor the articles of the covenant performed, but in the human nature. He was therefore to have a nature capable of and prepared for sufferings. Hence it is said, Heb. 10:5. 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not; but a body hast thou prepared me.' It behoved him to have a body to suffer that which was represented by these legal sacrifices wherein God took no pleasure. And he took a body of flesh, surrounded with the infirmities of our fallen nature, sin only excepted. He condescended to lay aside the robes of his glory, to make himself of no reputation, to take upon him the form of a servant, and be found in the likeness of men.

5. Christ satisfied offended justice in the room of the elect, and purchased eternal redemption for them. 'He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,' Phil. 2:8. This was the prime article in the covenant of grace, 'When he shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed,' Isa. 53:10. God required this sacrifice exclusive of all others in the first treaty. 'Sacrifice and burnt-offerings thou wouldst not; in them thou hadst no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I come,' &c. These sacrifices were entirely useless for the satisfaction of justice, though fit to prefigure the grand sacrifice that God intended. It was by the death of Christ alone that redemption was purchased for men, Rom. 5:10. Eph. 2:13. Col. 1:21. And when he was upon the cross, he cried, 'It is finished;' that is, the work of redemption is accomplished; I have done all that was appointed for me to do; the articles on my part are now fulfilled; there remain no more deaths for me to suffer.

Thus the elect are saved by the Lord Jesus Christ.

I shall conclude all with a few inferences.

1. Behold here the freedom and glory of sovereign grace, which is the sole cause why God did not leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery, as he did the fallen angels. He was no more obliged to the one than the other. Why did he chuse any of the fallen race of men to grace and glory? It was his mere good pleasure to pitch on some, and pass by others. He could have been without them all, without any spot either on his happiness or justice; but out of his mere good pleasure he pitched his love on a select number, in whom he will display the invincible efficacy of his sovereign grace, and thereby bring them to the fruition of glory. This proceeds from his absolute sovereignty. Justice or injustice comes not into consideration here. If he had pleased, he might have made all the objects of his love; and if he had pleased he might have chosen none, but have suffered Adam and all his numerous offspring to sink eternally into the pit of perdition. It was in his supreme power to have left all mankind under the rack of his justice; and, by the same right of dominion, he may pick out some men from the common mass, and lay aside others to bear the punishment of their crimes. There is no cause in the creature but all in God. It must be resolved into his sovereign will. So it is said, Rom. 9:15, 16. He saith to Moses, 'I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.' And yet God did not will without wisdom. He did not chuse hand over head, and act by mere will without reason and understanding. An infinite wisdom is far from such a kind of procedure. But the reason of God's proceedings is inscrutable to us, unless we could understand God as well as he understands himself. The rays of his infinite wisdom are too bright and dazzling for our weak and shallow capacities. The apostle acknowledges not only a wisdom in his proceeding, but riches and a treasure of wisdom; and not only that, but a depth and vastness of these riches of wisdom; but

was wholly incapable to give a scheme and inventory of it. Hence he cries out, Rom. 11:33. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' Let us humbly adore the divine sovereignty. We should cast ourselves down at God's feet, with a full resignation of ourselves to his sovereign pleasure. This is a more becoming carriage in a Christian, than contentious endeavours to measure God by our line.

2. This doctrine should stop men's murmurings and silence all their pleadings with or against God. O what strivings are there sometimes in the hearts of men about God's absolute sovereignty in electing some and rejecting others? The apostle insists much upon this in Rom. 9 where, having represented the Lord speaking thus by Moses, ver. 15. 'I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;' he presently prevents an objection, or the strife of man with God about that saying, ver. 19. 'Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?' This is man's plea against the sovereign will of God. But what saith the Lord by the apostle to such a pleader? We have his reproof of him for an answer, in ver. 20. 'Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?' The apostle brings in this argument as to man's eternal state, He must not strive with God about that. He must not say, Why doth God find fault with man? His absolute power in his reason why he disposeth thus or thus of thee, or any other man. He will give thee no account why it is so; but his own will to have it so. He may chuse some for the glory of his rich, free, and sovereign grace, and leave others to perish in their sins for the glory of his power and justice. This should stop men's mouths, and make them sit down quietly under all God's dealings.

3. This is ground of humility and admiration to the elect of God, and shows them to what they owe the difference that is between them and others, even to free grace. Those who are passed by were as eligible as those that were chosen. Though God hath dignified them,

and raised them to be heirs of glory, yet they were heirs of wrath, and no better than others by nature, Eph. 2:3. Well may they say with David in another case, 'Lord, what am I, or what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?' All were in the same corrupt mass, and nothing but free grace made the difference between the elected and the non-elected.

4. Then the elect shall not persist in their infidelity and natural state, but shall all be effectually called and brought in to Christ. Whatever good things God hath purposed for them shall surely be conferred upon and wrought in them by the irresistible efficacy of his powerful grace. God's counsel shall stand and he will do all his pleasure.

5. Then people, may know that they are elected. Hence is that exhortation, 2 Pet. 1:10. 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.' Though we cannot break in at the first hand upon the secrets of God, yet if we do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, receive him as our only Saviour, and submit to him as our Lord and Sovereign, we may know that we are elected, seeing the elect and they only are brought to believe. Others may be elected, but they cannot know it till they actually believe.

6. The Lord will never cast off his elect people. He that chose them from eternity, while he saw no good in them, will not afterwards cast them off. God's decree of election is the best security they can have for life and salvation, and a foundation that standeth absolutely sure. Whatever faults and follies they may be guilty of, yet the Lord will never cast them off. They shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

7. Lastly, This doctrine may teach us to form our judgment aright concerning the success of the gospel. The gospel and the ministrations thereof are designed for the bringing in of God's chosen ones. All never did nor ever will believe: but one thing is sure, that all who are ordained to eternal life shall believe and obey the gospel, Rom. 11:7.

OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE*

Psal. 89:3.—I have made a covenant with my chosen.

1 Cor. 15:45.—The last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

GOD made man upright, and entered into a covenant with him, forbidding him to eat of a certain tree in the garden of Eden, on pain of death, natural, spiritual, and eternal, and promising him, in case of continued obedience, life in its utmost extent. But, alas! man being in honour did not continue a night, but foully revolted from the obedience and allegiance he owed to his mighty Creator and bountiful Sovereign. Thus his misery was originally owing to the breaking of the covenant of works; and in that dismal state he and all his descendants had remained for ever, if God, in the wonderful depths of his amazing love and grace, had not from all eternity devised a method of recovery, by entering into a covenant with his own Son as second Adam, head and representative of those destined by sovereign pleasure to be heirs of salvation. Thus fallen man's recovery, from the first to the last step thereof, is entirely owing to the fulfilling of that covenant entered into betwixt the Father and the Son from eternal ages, and in it the whole mystery of our salvation lies. And this covenant I shall endeavour, through divine assistance, briefly to open up unto you, from the texts now read.

In the verse preceding the first text, there is mention made of a building of mercy, which presupposes miserable ruins, and denotes that this building is intended for the benefit of an elect world ruined by Adam's fall. Free grace and love set on foot this building for them, every stone in which, from the lowest to the highest, is mercy to them: from top to bottom, from the foundation-stone to the top-stone, all is free and rich mercy to them. And the ground of this

glorious building is God's covenant with his chosen, I have made a covenant with my chosen. In which and the second text four things are to be considered.

1. The foundation on which the building of mercy stands: a covenant, a divine covenant, a sure covenant. The first building for man's happiness, was a building of goodness, bounty, and liberality; but not of mercy, for man was not in misery when it was reared up: it was founded on a covenant too, the covenant of works made with the first Adam. This building soon fell in ruins; for being made with man, liable to change, his foot slipt, the covenant was broken, and the building tumbled down in an instant; there was no more safe dwelling there for Adam or his race, though most of them are still seeking shelter about the ruins of this first building, and will not come to the building of mercy. But this covenant is another, and of a different nature; the covenant of eternal life and salvation for poor sinners, the spiritual seed of the head of the covenant, to be given them in the way of free grace and mercy, and in which they are freed from the curse of the law and the wrath of God. The revelation and offer of this covenant unto the sons of men is called the gospel, announcing the glad tidings of life and salvation to ruined sinners.

2. The parties contractors in this covenant, I and my chosen, the last Adam. Both heaven and earth were concerned in this covenant; for it was a covenant of peace between them, at variance through sin. And accordingly the interests of both are consulted by the parties contractors.

1. On heaven's side is God himself, the party proposer, I have made a covenant with my chosen. Though he was the party offended, yet the motion for a covenant comes from him. The Father of Mercies beholding a lost world, his bowels of mercy yearn towards the objects that his sovereign pleasure pitches upon; and that mercy seeks a vent for itself, that it may be shown to the miserable. But justice stands in the way of its egress, unless a method be found to satisfy its claim, in order to pave a passage for the free efflux of mercy. Then saith the

Father 'The first covenant will not answer the purpose; another expedient must be fallen upon. The lost creatures cannot contract for themselves; and it another undertake not for them, they must perish; they cannot chuse an undertaker for themselves. I will chuse one for them, and I will make the covenant with my chosen.'

2. On man's side is God's chosen, or chosen One, for the word of God is singular; the son the last Adam. Who else as fit to be undertaker on man's side; who else could have been the Father's choice for this vast undertaking? No angel nor man was capable for it but the mighty One, ver. 19 whom the Father points out to us as his chosen, Isa. 42:1.

3. The making of this covenant between the parties, I have made a covenant with my chosen One. The Father and the Son made this covenant betwixt them; the bargain was completed by mutual agreement. The terms were on both hands fixed, and the compact closed between them, before the objects of mercy existed; even as the covenant of works betwixt God and the first Adam was made, before we breathed in God's air. And therefore, by the by, ye would take notice, that in reference to covenanting with God, ye pretend not to make a covenant of your own, setting down such and such terms for life and salvation, which you will do. All that remains for us in that matter is to take hold of God's covenant, Isa. 56:6 to believe the promise, approve cordially of the covenant, and consent to it for our part as agreed betwixt the Father and the second Adam; so shall ye evidence that ye are of those in whose name Christ stood consenting to the covenant. This is our making of a covenant mentioned, Psal. 50:5.—'that have made a covenant with me by or upon a sacrifice,' viz. by laying their hands, by faith, on the head of the sacrifice, thereupon cut down in their stead; and so transferring the guilt ceremonially on the sacrifice; but really and spiritually approving of the device of salvation by a crucified Saviour, and falling in with it as the method of salvation for them.

The original calls it 'cutting of a covenant,' or 'striking a covenant;' being a covenant by sacrifice, confirmed with blood; wherein the party contractor on man's side is both the priest and the sacrifice, the Father's wrath the fire that burnt it, and divine justice the sword that cut it down, Zech. 13:7. This is most lively represented, Gen. 15:9, &c.

Before I go farther in the explication, I will speak a little to this observation, 'That the foundation of all saving mercy to lost sinners is the covenant of grace, the covenant betwixt the Father and the second Adam.' To clear this consider,

1. It is the foundation of the first saving mercy that a poor sinner meets with; and that is the first grace given to the dead soul, viz. spiritual life, the new heart, the first resurrection, by which the soul is enabled to believe and embrace Jesus Christ, Ezek. 36:26. 'A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.' This is saving mercy, Tit. 3:5. 'According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' Upon what bottom can this stone in the building be laid, but on the covenant betwixt the Father and Christ? No doing of the sinner can be pretended here, for life and salvation, since the sinner is really dead spiritually, and can do nothing; but it is a performing of the promise of the covenant to Christ, Eph. 2:5. 'Even when we were dead in sins, he hath quickened us together with Christ.'

2. It is the foundation of the middle saving mercies. Look to the soul's actual believing; it is the budding of a promise, a branch of that covenant, Psal. 22:29, 31. 'None can keep alive his own soul. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness.' Compare John 6:37. 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.' Justification is the fruit that grows upon it, Isa. 53:11. 'By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.' So is Sanctification; they are sanctified in Christ Jesus, in virtue of that covenant, as they were corrupted and defiled in Adam by virtue of the breach of the first covenant, 1 Cor. 1:2 compare Ezek. 36:25. 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all

your idols will I cleanse you.' This is an absolute promise with respect to the sinner. All their obedience itself, and persevering in holy obedience, are fruits of the covenant, ver. 27. 'I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them,' Jer. 32:40. 'I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me;' and so belong to the promise of it, and are no part of the proper condition of it, which must go before partaking of the fruits of it.

3. It is the foundation of the crowning mercy, eternal life in heaven, Tit. 1:2. To whom could this be promised before the world began, but to the Son of God in the eternal compact? So that the sinner comes to be partaker of it in him, as he is of death in Adam, John 17:2. 'Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.' Hence notwithstanding all the good works of the saints, wrought all their life long, they receive eternal life as freely, and as much a gift, as if they had nothing, Rom. 6:21. 'The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Hence they who have done most for God, are as deep in the debt of free grace for their crown, as the thief on the cross, who believed in Christ and then expired. For all is made over to the several persons of the seed, upon one bottom of the covenant, the proper condition of which was fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

To confirm it, consider,

1. The justice of God could not admit of mercy to lost sinners, but upon the ground of this covenant; whereby the repairing of the honour of the law by obedience and suffering was sufficiently provided for, Psal. 40:6, 7. The first covenant being broken, the breakers must 'die without mercy,' Heb. 10:28 unless salvation to them be brought about by another covenant, that shall repair the breach; which could be no other but that made with the chosen One.

2. All saving relation betwixt Christ and us is founded on that covenant. Christ obeyed and died; but what benefit have the fallen

angels thereby? They were left hopeless for all that, and must encounter with unatoned justice. Why? Not that Christ's doing and dying was not able to save them; the blood of infinite value can have no bounds set to its sufficiency: but because their names were not in that covenant, it had no relation to them, but to lost sinners of Adam's race, Heb. 2:16.

3. The very design of making that covenant was, that it might be the channel of saving mercy, in which the whole rich flood of it might run, for the quickening, purifying, blessing, fructifying, and perfecting of an elect world, lying under the bands of death and the curse by the breach of the first covenant, Psal. 89:2. 'Mercy shall be built up for ever;' compared with the text, I have made a covenant with my chosen. It was the Father's design; and it was the Son's design, Cant. 3:10. Men are apt to devise unto themselves other channels of mercy; but this being the only channel designed by infinite wisdom, here the sinful creature will find saving mercy flowing freely, but all other channels he will find quite dry.

4. Lastly, It has been the ground of all the saints' expectations and hopes of mercy, in all ages. It was first published in the promise made to Adam, Gen. 3:15. 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent;' and that was the stay of the souls of the faithful till Abraham's time: then it was more clearly discovered in the promise given to him, Gen. 22:18. 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' The ceremonial law, and the prophecies of Christ, pointed out very fully. And thus believers under the Old Testament built their faith of mercy on it. And since that time it has been most clearly and fully discovered in the gospel; and so the New Testament church have raised their faith of mercy on it.

USE I. Behold here the freeness of saving mercy. There is a fountain of mercy opened to sinful creatures; and it was not only provided for them without any merit of theirs, but without so much as any application made by them for it, Rom. 11:34. A covenant of grace is made betwixt the Father and his own Son as party-contractor on

man's side, who doth this for their salvation while they knew nothing about the matter. Here is rich and free grace.

1. It is a vain thing to remain about the ruins of the old building, which stood on the covenant of works, and to expect mercy, life, or salvation there, Gal. 2:10. 'Man is not justified by the works of the law. It is evident, that man must have mercy now, else he is ruined for ever, without any possible outgate from his misery. If the building of mercy could have been without a new foundation, why was it laid, and laid so deep? But a new foundation was not laid in vain, but because it was necessary that it should be. Therefore expect no mercy in the way of the first covenant. Mount Sinai shews only thunders and lightnings, the voice of the trumpet waxing louder and louder, and the voice of words, which sinners are not able to bear. There is no voice of mercy and grace but from mount Zion.

2. What a wretched disposition in man's nature is it, to be so much addicted to the way of the covenant of works? God saw that there was no hope for fallen man that way; therefore he made a new covenant to build mercy upon. But fallen man will not see it, but still aims to make a shift for himself that way. Our father Adam was well housed indeed in the first building, if he had managed well; but it was by his sin laid in ruins. Yet his sinful children still abide about these ruins, building cottages to themselves of the ruins, seeking righteousness as it were by the work of the law, Rom. 9:32 and pretending to repair it for themselves. The Jews were never more addicted to the temple, than mankind naturally is to that building on the first covenant. The Jews, after their temple had been laid in ruins, never to be rebuilt, did notwithstanding, in the days of Julian the apostate, attempt to rebuild it; and ceased not, till by an earthquake which shook the old foundation, and turned all down to the ground, and by fire from heaven which burned all their tools, they were forced to forbear. Thus it fares with men with respect to the building on the old covenant; they will never give it over, nor cry for a Mediator in earnest, till mount Sinai, where they work, be all on fire about them. O the mischief of this practice! They thereby affront the wisdom of

God, which found out this new way; they despise the grace, free love, and mercy of it; they trample upon the great salvation brought about by it, Heb. 2:3. And withal they fight against their own interest; will not enter by the door that is opened for them, but hang about the door that is closed, and shall never be opened to them, and so perish. Thus they forsake their own mercy,' Jonah 2:8.

3. Lastly, Quit the old Covenant, then, and take hold of the new, that you may be personally entered into it. This you may do by taking hold of Christ, in the way of believing; for he is given for a covenant of the people, Isa. 42:6. So the proposal of the covenant is made to you, Isa. 55:3. And thus shall ye be lodged in the building of saving mercy; and mercy shall be built up to you for ever. But if you do not take hold of this covenant, ye are off the foundation of mercy, and can look for none of it. But to proceed in the explication of our texts:

4. The nature of the covenant made betwixt these glorious parties. Concerning which we may gather from the texts,

(1.) The design of it, viz. life, the most valuable interest of mankind. The last Adam was made a quickening spirit, viz. to give life, life in perfection, to dead sinners, dead legally, and dead morally.

(2.) The persons for whom this life was designed, the elect, I have made a covenant with my chosen. Christ is the head elect, or head of the company chosen to life. In one and the same decree, the Father chose Christ to be the head, and them to be the members. Hence we are said to be 'chosen in him,' Eph. 1:4.

(3.) The representation. As in the first covenant Adam, the party contractor on man's side, was a representative, representing and sustaining the persons of all his natural seed; so in this covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ, the party contractor and undertaker on man's side, is a representative, representing and sustaining the persons of all his spiritual seed. This appears from his being designed the second Adam, who was a type of him, Rom. 5:14. As the first Adam,

representing all his seed in the covenant of works, brought sin and death on them; so Christ, representing all his seed in the covenant of grace, brought righteousness and life to them.

(4.) The condition of the covenant laid on the elect's representative, to be performed by him in their name and stead. He was to be the last Adam, to take upon him man's nature, to clothe himself with our flesh, and therein to go through with what the first Adam had stuck in; that is, to fulfil the covenant, by yielding perfect obedience to it, and suffering the penalty thereof in their room.

(5.) The promise of the covenant, to be performed on that condition by the God of truth. This is implied in these words, I have made a covenant with my chosen: i. e. 'I have engaged for such and such benefits, and have bound myself by solemn promise to my chosen, on condition of what I have required of him.' This promise contains whatever is necessary for the complete happiness of the mystical body, grace and glory.

5. Lastly, There is one thing more specially to be considered, according to these texts, belonging to the nature of this covenant, viz. that the party contractor on man's side is the administrator of the covenant: The last Adam was made a quickening Spirit. As Christ was God he could not fail in the performance of his engagement; and therefore God took his single bond for sufficient security; and thereupon he was made administrator of the covenant, Matth. 28:18. He entered on this office at the beginning, and intimated the covenant to fallen Adam in paradise, Gen. 3:15 and will continue in that office till the last elect soul be brought in. The treasure put into his hand is the promises of the covenant, which are the reward of his own obedience and death, Col. 1:9. Hence he bequeaths all the promised benefits by testament, and lives to be the executor of it. There is a fulness of the Spirit lodged in him, to be communicated to the elect dead in sins; and he is made a life-giving head unto them, John 1:4. Eternal life was lodged in him, 1 John 5:11.; and it is communicated by him, John 17:2 as the great trustee and steward of

heaven. In the faith of this, Adam called his wife Life, or an Enlivener, Gen. 3:20. No wonder he should be called the covenant itself, Isa. 42:6 since he is the head of the covenant, unto whom the elect are joined unto God in covenant, the condition of the covenant was performed by him, and the Father has put the promises of the covenant in his hand. This is good news to men, that the promised life is in the hands of the Mediator, who is of our flesh and bone.

The doctrine arising from the two texts, thus compared and explained, is,

DOCT. 'The covenant of grace for life and salvation to ruined sinners, was made with Christ the second Adam, and he constituted Administrator thereof.'

In handling this important subject, I shall consider,

I. The parties in the covenant of grace.

II. The parts of it.

III. The administration of it.

IV. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to consider the parties in the covenant of grace. And these are the party contractor on heaven's side, the party contractor on man's side, and the party contracted or undertaken for.

FIRST, Upon the one side is God himself, and God only, as in the covenant of works. As the covenant was made from eternity, there was no other, and no occasion for any other, to see to the interests of heaven in this transaction. I think that God essentially considered was the party contractor in the person of the Father, Tit. 1:2. Eph. 1:3. Hereby the Son and the Holy Ghost have their part in the covenant on heaven's side, as the party offended; and in the mean time a peculiar agency in this great work is attributed to the Father

on that side, as there is unto the Son on man's side. And that we may have some distinct view of God in this character in the covenant of grace, we must consider the following things.

1. God from eternity decreed the creation of man after his own image, and the making of the covenant with him. This whole dispensation was before the Eternal Mind, in all the parts and apurtenances thereof, though, by reason of making that covenant with a creature, it could not actually take place but in time, Acts 15:18.

2. He also from eternity decreed to permit man to fall, and so to break that covenant, and thereby to involve himself and all his posterity in ruin. This fall he permitted for his own holy ends, purposing to bring about good from it.

3. God is to be considered in this covenant as an offended God, offended with all the sins of all mankind, original and actual. In the first covenant God contracted with man as with a friend, without the interposition of a mediator: but in the second covenant it was not nor could be so; for man is considered in it as a fallen creature, a transgressor of the law, an enemy to God; and it is a covenant of reconciliation and peace, for those who had been at war with heaven.

4. Yet he is to be considered as a God purposing and decreeing from eternity to manifest the glory of his mercy, free love and grace, in the salvation of some of the lost race of Adam, Eph. 3:10, 11. Without such a purpose of grace in God, there had never been a covenant of grace.

5. Notwithstanding we are to consider him in this matter as a just God, who cannot but do right, give sin a just recompense, and magnify his holy law and make it honourable. Upon the motion, then, of extending mercy to any of mankind, the justice of God interposeth, and pleads that mercy cannot be shewn, but upon terms agreeable to law and justice. And it was not agreeable either to the

nature of God, or to his truth in his word, to shew mercy in prejudice of his exact justice, if a throne of grace is to be erected, it must not be set on the ruins of the justice of God. And therefore justice required,

(1.) That the law which was violated be fully satisfied, and the honour thereof repaired, by suffering and obedience, the former such as may satisfy the sanction of the law and the latter the commanding part thereof. And this the sinners most either do for themselves or another in their room, who can be accepted as sufficient surety.

(2.) That since it was man that sinned, it must be man also who must suffer and obey, that one nature may not sin, and another be put to suffering for it.

Thus lay the impediments in the way of mercy to fallen man, and who could have removed them but God himself? Man could not here have acted for himself; his ability to obey was lost; and ability to suffer what was due to him for sin, so as to exhaust it, and deliver himself, he never had. Angels were not able to bear the burden; their finite natures could not have born so as to bear off infinite wrath. Therefore,

6. Lastly, The Father pitches upon his own Son for this work, as one able to make way for mercy over all difficulties, and remove the impediments lying in the way of its egress, Psal. 89:19. He was able for the work as being the Father's Fellow, Zech. 13:7.; his equal, Phil. 2:6 and so one of infinite power and dignity. And here four things are to be considered.

(1.) The Father designed that his own Son, the eternal Word, should, for this purpose of mercy, take on man's nature, and become man, Heb. 10:5. He saw that sacrifice and offering would not answer the case, that the debt was greater than to be paid so easily, and the work greater than to be managed by a person of less dignity. Wherefore, that the darling attribute of mercy might not for ever remain veiled,

he wills that the human nature be united to the divine in the person of his Son.

(2.) He chuseth him to be the head of the election, being one thus in the decree of God raised up from among the people, Psal. 89:19.; and to be the last Adam, the federal head and representative of such as sovereign pleasure should pitch upon to be vessels of mercy, and enrol in the book of life, that they might have a head who was both God and man, Eph. 1:22.

(2.) He designed a certain number as it were by name to be the constituent members of that body chosen to life, whereof he was the designed head, and gave them to him for that end, Phil. 4:3. John 17:9. They were a chosen company, whom sovereign grace selected from among the rest, on a purpose of love, and gave to Christ, the last Adam, for a seed, John 17:6.: therefore they are said to be chosen in him, Eph. 1:4.

(4.) The Father proposed to him, as the last Adam, the conditions and terms of the new covenant, treating with the elect in him as with all mankind in the first covenant. Now, he has found one who is able to answer for the lost company, and treats with him in their name, for life and salvation to them, in a suitableness to the honour of law and justice.

Inf. 1. The redemption of the soul is precious. The salvation of sinners was a work greater than the making of the world. The powerful Word commanded, and the last was done: but much more was to be done ere a sinner could be saved from wrath.

2. Think not that Christ is more willing to save you than the Father is. The will of Christ, his Father, and Spirit, are one. And one person of the glorious Trinity cannot be less willing to help poor sinners than another is. Which should incite and encourage you to come to God by Christ.

3. Behold the matchless love of the Father to lost sinners of Adam's race, 1 John 3:1. The whole contrivance sprung from his free grace, shewing itself in greatest measure and exceeding riches of grace, Eph. 2:7. Man lay in the utmost misery before him: a most miserable creature, needing help, but making no application to him for it, Rom. 11:34.; a sinful creature, having nothing in him to provoke to liking, but loathing; a criminal, upon whom justice demanded vengeance; one whose debt no creature was able to undertake for; therefore he gave his own Son, a gift in grace without a parallel.

SECONDLY, Upon the other side is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, with the elect, his spiritual seed, Heb. 2:13.; the former as the party-contractor and undertaker, the latter as the party contracted and undertaken for; which is a good reason for his name Immanuel, Matth. 1:23. The party-contractor then in this covenant with God is our Lord Jesus Christ. He managed the interests of men in this eternal bargain, and there were none of that party with him to help him, nor capable to do it. And he acted in a twofold capacity towards the making of this covenant, as the eternal Word, and the second Adam.

First, As the eternal Word, having no nearer relation to man than as his Creator, and sovereign Lord, John 1:1, 2, 3. Our Lord Jesus Christ is now our near kinsman, the elder brother of the family of mankind, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; but from the beginning it was not so. He was from eternity the only begotten Son of God, and by voluntary dispensation only, for the relief of fallen man he became man, and so was allied to the house of Adam. Here let us consider what our Lord Jesus did as the eternal Word in this covenant, viz. his consenting to it, and the effect of that consent.

1. Let us consider what our Lord did as the eternal Word in making of this covenant. He consented to the proposals made by his Father, in order to the erecting of a new covenant with lost sinners of Adam's race. God saw there was a necessity of a new bargain for the salvation of any of them; that the old covenant would not answer his purpose

of mercy; and that this covenant could not be made unless his own Son became the head of it. Hereto the Son of God, for the glory of his Father, and the salvation of sinners, readily agreed; and gave his consent.

1st, That he should become man, by taking into a personal union with himself a holy human nature, according to the eternal destination of his Father, Heb. 10:5, 6, 7. He consents to be incarnate, that all flesh might not perish; which was accordingly fulfilled in time, John 1:14. The two families of heaven and earth were at war, and no peace could take place betwixt them but through a Mediator. And where could a fit Mediator be found, a day's-man meet to interpose betwixt such parties, who would not either be too high or too low, in respect of one of the parties at variance? Man or angel would have been too low in respect of God; and an unvailed God would have been too high in respect of sinful man. Wherefore the Son of God, that he might be a fit Mediator betwixt the parties, as he was by his eternal generation high enough, in respect of God, so he consents to become low enough in respect of man, by a temporal generation of a woman.

2dly, That he should be a second Adam, a head and representative of the chosen company, sustaining their persons, and acting in their name, Psal. 40:6, 7. 'Mine ears hast thou opened,' or 'bored,' as Exod. 21:6; thereby intimating his consent to be the Father's servant for ever, in the work of man's salvation. It was evident the breach betwixt God and man was greater than to be taken away by a mere intermessenger, which should go betwixt the parties, and so reconcile them with bare words. There could not be a covenant of peace betwixt God and sinners, without a reparation of damages done to the honour of God, and without honouring his holy law by an exact obedience as his subjects: and both of these were quite beyond their reach. The Son of God, beholding the strait sinners were brought to, while they could neither do for themselves, nor any in all the creation could afford them help, saith, 'Lo, I come;' I am content to take their place, and put myself in their room, as a second Adam.

Thus was the foundation of the covenant laid, by the Father's proposal, and the consent of his Son thereto, as the eternal Word.

2. Let us consider the effect of this consent of the eternal Word. He was thereby constituted Mediator betwixt God and man, as God-man in one person, 1 Tim. 2:5. Having had the Father's call thereto, and that call being accepted by his own consent, he was thereby established the great Mediator betwixt God and man, for making and keeping the designed peace between heaven and earth; through whom, and in whom, as a public person, God might enter into a new covenant with sinners of Adam's race. Thus also was he constituted the second Adam, and representative of all the elect, with whom the Father might treat as one answering for them. And was constituted Mediator or Midsman betwixt God and sinners in two respects.

1st, He was constituted Mediator in respect of his natures. He was a substantial Mediator, as partaking of the nature of both parties. He was God equal with the Father from all eternity, and so stood related to heaven: he was designed to be man from eternity, and so stood related to earth. In this divine constitution four things are to be considered.

(1.) That he should be a real man, having a true body, and a reasonable soul, and not be so in appearance only, Heb. 2:14 that so he might be capable to suffer, since without shedding of blood was no remission; and the divine nature could not suffer.

(2.) That that body of his should not be made of nothing, nor of any thing but what belongs to Adam's family, Psal. 89:19. Gal. 4:4.; that so he might indeed be one of the family of Adam, Luke 3 ult.; a brother of those in whose name he was to act, Heb. 2:11 and so the same nature that sinned might suffer.

(3.) That that human nature should be united to his divine nature in the way of a personal union, John 1:4; the divine nature in the person of the Son marrying the human nature to itself, that the Son

of God should become as really the Son of man, and of Adam's family, as he was the Son of God, and of the family of heaven. And this to the end that what he might do or suffer in the name of his brethren, might be of infinite value and efficacy, as the deed of a divine person, Acts 20:28. 1 John 1:7.

(4.) That that human nature to be thus united to the divine in the person of the Son, should be a holy thing; since sinful flesh was not capable of an immediate union with God; and that therefore, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, that substance of the body that was to be prepared for the Mediator, should be separated from all corruption and infection from the first Adam; and the soul and body should both be of a perfectly holy nature, Luke 1:35. This was necessary to qualify him to be Mediator, the last Adam; for had he himself been defiled with the least taint of sin, he could not have expiated the sins of others, Heb. 7:26, 27.

2dly, As by his consent to become man, he was constituted substantial Mediator; so by his consent to become last (or second) Adam, he was constituted official Mediator betwixt God and man, or Mediator in respect of office, 1 Tim. 2:5, 6. He had his Father's call to the office, Heb. 5:4.; and having consented to and embraced the call, he was invested in the office, and treated with as such from all eternity, Prov. 8:22, 23.

Now was there one provided to take the desperate cause of lost sinners in hand: a glorious and a mighty One, with whom the new covenant of grace might be made, with safety to the Father's honour and the case of perishing sinners: A fit hand, as partaking of both natures, and invested with that office, which he and only he was fit for. And this brings me to the second capacity wherein he acted in this matter. Then he acted,

Secondly, As the second Adam, head and representative of the election, by the Father's destination and his own consent. What he did as the Eternal Word, made way for the covenant, and was, as it

were, the preliminaries of the covenant: but it was in this capacity that the covenant was formally made with him, as appears from our texts already explained.

Now Christ standing in that capacity, as second Adam, head of the election, did two things, whereby he entered actually into the covenant with his Father.

1. He accepted the gift of the particular persons elected by name, from all eternity, by his Father, made to him. Heb. 2:13.; and in token thereof owns them in particular as his brethren, ver. 11. Like as the first Adam, in the making of the first covenant, stood alone without actual issue; yet had destinated for him a numerous issue, even all mankind, who should with him be comprehended in the same covenant; which Adam, virtually at least, accepted: so God having chosen a certain number of lost mankind he, as their original proprietor, gives them to Christ, the appointed head, to be his members, and comprehended with him in the second covenant, though as yet none of them had a being; and he accepts the gift of them, is well pleased to take these in particular for his body mystical, for which he should engage in covenant to his Father, John 17:6, 10.

2. Christ did in the name and stead of these particular persons elected unto life, and given unto him, consent unto the conditions and terms of the covenant, proposed by the Father for life and salvation to them. And thus the covenant was concluded, Psal. 40:6, 7, 8. Isa. 53:10. As the first Adam, representing all his natural seed, did in their name and stead consent to the terms and conditions of the first covenant, and so entered into that covenant for them; so the second Adam representing all his spiritual seed, did as a public person, in their name, consent to the terms of the second covenant. And as he had in the eternal decree taken on him their nature, so he did from all eternity put on their person, answer to their names as being in law one person with them, even as the cautioner is with the principal debtor, and the husband with the wife in case of debt, who are one in the eye of the law; and, having heard all the demands of

law and justice upon them, he struck hands with the Father, to satisfy all these demands to the utmost.

For clearing of this purpose I shall shew,

1. That the second covenant was made with Christ, as the last Adam, head and representative of the elect.

2. Why it was made so with him.

First, I am to shew, that the second covenant was made with Christ, as the last Adam, head and representative of the elect. Consider,

1. Covenants typical of the covenant of grace were made with persons representing their seed. The covenant of royalty, a type of this covenant, was made with David, as representative of his seed; therefore the covenant of grace typified by it was made with Christ, as the representative of his seed. Hence in our first text the party covenanted with and sworn to is called David, which is one of the names of Christ typified by David, Hos. 3 ult. for which cause the mercies of the covenant are called 'the sure mercies of David,' Isa. 55:3. And this David is God's servant having a seed comprehended with him in the covenant, Psal. 89:4. To the same purpose it may be observed, that Phinehas' covenant of priesthood was a type of the covenant of grace; and in it Phinehas stood as representative of his seed, typifying Jesus Christ representing his spiritual seed in the covenant of grace, Numb. 25:12, 13. This is evident from Psal. 110:4 where the everlasting priesthood promised to Phinehas has had its full accomplishment in Jesus Christ. Hereto may be added, that the covenant made with Noah and his sons was made with them as the heads of the new world, and representatives of their seed, Gen. 9:9, 11. And that this covenant was a type of the covenant of grace, and Noah therein a type of Christ, is clear from its being established on a sacrifice, Gen 8:20, 21.; from the nature of that covenant, viz. that there should not be another deluge, chap. 9:11.; typical of the wrath of God against the elect, Isa. 54:9, 10 confirmed by the rainbow

about the throne, Rev. 4:3. Wherefore, since in the covenant of royalty, by which the covenant of grace is typified in our text, and in other covenants typical thereof, the parties with whom they were made stood as heads, public persons and representatives of their seed, it is evident, that the covenant of grace typified by these was made with Christ as the head and representative of his spiritual seed: for whatever is attributed to any person or thing as a type, hath its accomplishment really and chiefly in the person or thing typified.

2. This appears also from his being the last Adam, as he is called in the second text; the reason of which must be taken, not from the nature common to the first and last Adam, for all mankind partake of that; but from their common office of federal headship and representation, in the respective covenants touching man's eternal happiness, which is peculiar unto Adam and the man Christ. Accordingly Adam is called 'the first man,' and Christ 'the second man,' 1 Cor. 15:47. But Christ is no otherwise the second man, than he is the second federal head or representative in the second covenant, as Adam was the first federal head and representative in the first. Wherefore, as the first covenant was made with Adam, as the head and representative of all mankind, the second covenant was made with Christ, as the head and representative of all the elect.

3. The promises of the covenant were made to Christ, as the second Adam, head and representative of the elect, Gal. 3:16. 'Unto Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith,—And to thy seed, which is Christ.' I own that here is meant Christ mystical, the head and members: To them the promises are made, but primarily to the head, secondarily to the members in him; even as the promise of life was made in the first covenant to Adam, and to all his natural seed in him. And so the promise plainly stands, Isa. 53:10, 11. 'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: for he shall bear their iniquities.' Thus the covenant is said to be made with the

house of Israel, the spiritual Israel, yet is directed, not to them, but to another person, Heb. 8:10.; the reason of which plainly appears in the promises being made to Christ, as their head and representative. Now, if the promises being made to Christ, as the head and representative of the elect, the covenant was made with him as such; for it is the covenant to which the promises belong, Eph. 2:12.; and he to whom they were primarily made, was no doubt the party contractor.

4. This federal headship of Christ, and his representing of the elect in the covenant of grace, is evident from his suretyship in that covenant, whereby he became Surety for them, Heb. 7:22. Now, he was Surety for them in the way of satisfaction for their debt, and the punishment due to them; and that as for persons utterly unable to answer for themselves, so that he took the whole upon himself. Now, such a surety is a true representative of the parties he is Surety for, one person with them in the eye of the law. Hence not only is Christ said to have been 'made sin for us,' 2 Cor. 5:21 to have had 'our sins laid upon him,' Isa. 53:6 to have 'died in our room and stead,' 1 Tim. 2:6. Rom. 5:6; but also we are said to have been 'crucified with him,' Gal. 2:20.; to be 'made the righteousness of God in him,' 2 Cor. 5:21.; yea, to 'be raised up' and glorified 'in him,' Eph. 2:6.; and to be 'made alive in him,' as we 'died in Adam,' 1 Cor. 15:22. All which necessarily requires this headship and representation of his in the covenant.

5. Christ bears the name of the elect, being called by their name, even as they are by his; a plain evidence of their being one in the eye of the law, and God treating with Christ as their representative in the covenant. The elect are called Israel, viz. the spiritual Israel, Rom. 9:6; and so is our Lord Jesus Christ, Isa. 49:3. Heb. 'Thou art my servant: Israel, in whom I will glorify myself.' This is plainly meant of Christ, ver. 6; and the sense is, Thou art Israel representative, in whom I will glorify myself, as I was dishonoured by Israel, the collective body of the elect. And this may give light into that passage, Psal. 24:6 compare ver. 7. &c. Thus the first man was called Adam, or man, as being the head and representative of all mankind, the person

in whom God treated with the whole kind. Accordingly the elect are comprehended under the name of Christ, Gal. 3:16. Col. 1:24; as all men are under the name of Adam, Psal. 31:5, 11. 'Verily every man (Heb. all Adam) is vanity.'

Secondly, I come to shew why the second covenant was made with Christ as a representative, the last Adam.

1. That infinite love might have an early vent, even from eternity. God's eternal love to his elect vented itself in the covenant of grace, which is an everlasting or eternal covenant, Heb. 13:20. Hence we find that covenant and that love of the same eternal date, Isa. 55:3. 'I will make with you an everlasting covenant, Heb. a covenant of eternity.' Jer. 31:3. 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love, Heb. a love of eternity.' But since the elect are but of yesterday, the covenant of grace behoved to be like the covenant of works, but a yesterday's covenant, a time-covenant, if it was not made with Christ as their representative; it could not have been an eternal covenant otherwise; the promise of eternal life, which is undoubtedly a promise of that covenant, could not otherwise have been of so ancient a date, as the apostle says it was. Tit. 1:2. 'before the world began.'—And how could an eternal covenant be made with time-creatures originally, but in their eternal head and representative? Or how could an eternal covenant be made personally with them, by way of personal application to them, had it not been from eternity made with another as their head and representative?

2. Because otherwise it could not have been made a conditional covenant at all, to answer the design of it. This covenant took place on the breach of the first covenant; and it is a covenant of life, Mal. 2:5 life to dead sinners; the last Adam being made a quickening spirit. It was the great design of it, that dead sinners might have life, Tit. 1:2. Now, in order to this, a holy just God stood upon conditions, without the performing of which that life was not to be given; and they were high conditions, Psal. 40:6. 1 Thess. 5:10. Now, how could an effectual conditional covenant for life be made with dead sinners,

otherwise than in a representative? Can dead souls perform any condition for life pleasing to God? They must have life before they can do any thing, if it were ever so small a condition. Therefore a conditional covenant for life could not be made with sinners in their own persons; especially considering that the conditions were so high for life to the sinner, that man at his best state was not able for them, far less in his sinful state. Therefore, if such a covenant was made at all, it behoved to be made with Christ as the sinner's representative, Rom. 8:3, 4.

3. That it might be a covenant of grace indeed, and not a covenant of works, to sinners themselves. It is evident, that the design of this covenant was to exalt free grace, and that it is framed so as to be a covenant of pure grace, and not of works to us, whatever it was to Christ, Rom. 4:16. Eph. 2:9. And thus indeed it is a covenant of pure grace, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, as representative, being the sole undertaker for, and performer of all the conditions of the covenant in the sinner's name; whereby all ground of boasting is taken from the creature. But this is marred upon the supposition of the covenant being made with the sinner in and by himself, standing as principal party contracting with God, undertaking and performing the condition of the covenant for life: for how low soever these conditions undertaken and wrought by the sinner himself be, the promise of the covenant is made to them, and so, according to the scripture, it is a covenant of works, Rom. 4:4, 5. And there is no difference between Adam's covenant and such a covenant, but in degree, which alters not the kind of covenant.

4. That the communication of righteousness and life to sinners might be in as compendious a way as the communication of death and sin was, Rom. 5:19. God having made the covenant of works with Adam as the representative of his seed, sin and death was communicated to them all from him as a deadly head, having broken the covenant. This being so, it was not agreeable to the method of divine procedure, to treat with every one to be saved, by themselves as principal parties in the new covenant for life; but with one public

person for them all, who should be, by his fulfilling the covenant, a quickening head to them, from whom life might be derived unto them, in as compendious a way as death from the first Adam. This was most agreeable to the way of him whose mercy is above all his other works.

5. That it might be a sure covenant, as entered into with a sure hand, Rom. 4:16. The first covenant was made with a mere creature as principal party and contractor; and though he was a holy and righteous creature, yet he was so unstable in performing the condition laid on him, that the promise was lost. Wherefore the fallen creature was not fit to be the principal party, or party contractor in the new covenant, wherein the promises were to be sure to poor sinners, and not to misgive. Therefore the Lord seeing them all a broken company, not to be trusted in this matter, he proposes to his own Son to be head of the new covenant, and there-in to act for and in name of those given him for a seed; which being accepted, the business is made sure. God looked only to him for the performance of the condition, and the promises were made to him, and so are sure to all the seed, Gal. 3:16. Compare Psal. 89:28. 'My mercy will I keep for him, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.'

Inf. 1. What a spring of unspeakable comfort is it to believers, to look back into eternity, before the world was made, and to behold the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, standing as the last Adam, contracting with God in the second covenant! This may move them to cry, 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' Rom. 11:33 and to shout, Grace, grace to the glorious contrivance, so full of grace. Here they may see,

1. The covenant on which their salvation depends made with a near relation of theirs, even as was the first covenant by the breaking of which they were ruined. In the one stood the first Adam for them, in the other the second Adam. Why should they look as strangers

towards the covenant of grace? The party contracting in it with God is their near kinsman, their elder brother, flesh of their flesh, and bone of their bone, Eph. 5:30.; nay, their Father, who is nearer to and has a more natural concern in them than a brother; even the second Adam, who is their second Father; in respect of which I think he is called the everlasting Father,' Isa. 9:6 compare Heb. 2:13.

2. Their nature highly dignified; the human nature, however corrupt it is in the multitude that partake of it, yet pure and spotless in the second Adam, fit to enter into a new covenant with an offended God. Man's nature, as it was defiled by Adam, became so abominable, that it could never again appear before God immediately to covenant with him; but in Christ it is so perfectly pure, that it was capable of an immediate union with the Godhead in his person, and so of covenanting with him immediately.

3. The covenant so stable and firm, that it cannot be broken, the Son of God himself, being the second Adam, contractor in this covenant. The first Adam being a mere creature, not confirmed, his covenant was liable to breaking, he was capable of failing, and did fail, in the performance of the condition: and so are all the covenants made with God upon conditions to be performed by sinful men: but in regard of the party-contractor, viz. the Lord Jesus, the covenant of grace is an everlasting covenant, it cannot be broken, Isa. 55:3. Psal. 89:30–33, 34.

4. The covenant well-ordered in all things, as for the honour of God, so for their good in time and eternity. The second Adam, manager for them, was the Son of God, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid; he managed for his own family, his own children: so there was neither affection nor wisdom wanting in him. We may be sure then there is nothing in the covenant that their good would have required to have been kept out; and nothing out that their case required to be in. What remains then, but that by believing they approve of the covenant, and take the comfort of it?

Inf. 2. The covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace are not two distinct covenants, but one and the same covenant. I know some great and good men have taught otherwise, alleging the covenant of redemption to have been made with Christ, and the covenant of grace to be made with believers; though they were far from designing or approving the ill use some have made of that principle. However, the doctrine of this church, in the Larger Catechism, is in express words, 'The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed.' From whence it necessarily follows, that the covenant made with Christ and with believers, or the covenant of grace and redemption, are one and the same covenant. Only, in respect of Christ, it is called the covenant of redemption, forasmuch as in it he engaged to pay the price of our redemption; but in respect of us, the covenant of grace, forasmuch as the whole of it is of free grace to us, God himself having provided the ransom, and thereupon made over life and salvation to poor sinners, his chosen by free promise, without respect to any work of theirs to entitle them thereto*.

Inf. 3. As all mankind sinned in Adam, so believers obeyed and suffered in Christ the second Adam. For as the covenant of works being made with Adam as a public person and representative, when he broke the covenant, all sinned in him; so the covenant of grace being made with Christ as a public person and representative, all believers obeyed and suffered in him, when he fulfilled the covenant, Rom. 8:3, 4. Gal. 2:20.

Inf. 4. Believers are justified immediately by the righteousness of Christ, without any righteousness of their own intervening, as all men are condemned from their birth upon the sin of Adam, before they have done good or evil in their own persons. So that they are righteous before God with the self-same righteousness, which was wrought by Christ in the fulfilling of this covenant; which righteousness is imputed to them, not in its effects only, so as their faith, repentance, and sincere obedience, are accepted as their evangelical righteousness, on which they are justified; but in itself.

For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified; and faith, repentance, and new obedience, considered as conditions performed, are works and cannot found a title to justification.

Inf. 5. The covenant of grace is absolute, and not conditional to us. For being made with Christ as representative of his seed, all the conditions of it were laid on him, and he has fulfilled the same. So what remains of the covenant to be accomplished is only the fulfilling of the promises to him and his spiritual seed; even as it would have been with the first Adam's seed, if once he had fulfilled the condition of the covenant.

Inf. 6. The way to attain to the enjoyment of all the benefits of the covenant of grace, is to unite with Christ the head of the covenant by faith. Being thus ingrafted into him, ye shall partake of that happiness secured to mystical Christ in the everlasting covenant; even as by your becoming sons of Adam by your natural generation, ye fall under that sin and death which passeth on all by the breaking of the first covenant, Rom. 5:12.

Inf. 7. The offer of Christ made to you in the gospel, is the offer of the covenant of grace to you, and of all the benefits thereof; and the embracing of Christ is the embracing of the covenant, and the personal entering into it. The covenant of grace held forth in the gospel, is the cord of love let down from heaven to perishing sinners shipwrecked in Adam, to save them from sinking into the bottom of the gulf, and to hale them to land. It is their duty to lay hold of the covenant by faith, Isa. 56:4, 6. And that is done by taking hold of Christ in the free promise, believing that he is held forth to you in particular, confiding and trusting in him for your salvation from sin and wrath, upon the ground of God's faithfulness in the promise, 'Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life,' John 3:16. For he is given for a covenant to you, Isa. 49:8 and 42:6. So receiving him you receive the covenant, he being the head of the covenant, who performed the condition, and to whom the promises were made.

Inf. 8. The covenant of grace is a contrivance of infinite wisdom and love, worthy to be embraced by poor sinners with all joy, 2 Sam. 23:5. O admirable contrivance of help for a desperate case! wonderful contrivance of a covenant with them who were incapable of coming into the presence of a holy just God, or to perform the least condition for life and salvation! A new bargain for life and salvation to lost sinners, on the highest terms, made with those who were incapable to come up to the lowest terms! Wisdom found out the way, viz. by a representative: the love of the Father engaged him to make the proposal; and the love of the Son induced him to accept it. Thus a sure covenant is made, and a firm foundation laid, on which the sinner may safely lay his whole weight, for upon it lies the weight of God's honour, Isa. 28:16.

Inf. last, How sinful and dangerous must the course of those be who practically corrupt the covenant of grace, pretending to make a covenant with God, as parties contractors and undertakers, for life and salvation, instead of taking hold of God's covenant; the carnal Jews did so corrupt, it, looking for life and salvation, not for the sake of the promised seed alone, but for their obedience to the ceremonial and moral law: and thus do many to this day practically corrupt it. They think the covenant of grace is a promise of life and salvation upon condition of faith, repentance, and sincere obedience to the law: whereupon they consent to these terms, and solemnly undertake to perform them, and then, upon their (fancied) performance of them, they challenge life and salvation, as having done their part. This quite overturns the nature of the covenant of grace, Rom. 4:4 and 11:6. The sinfulness of it is great, as overlooking Christ, the great undertaker and party contractor by the appointment of the Father; and putting themselves in his room, to act, and do, and work for themselves for life. And the danger of it must be great, as laying a foundation to bear the weight of their souls, which divine wisdom saw to be quite unable to bear it, Gal. 5:4. So the issue of such covenanting must be, that the covenanters shall lie down in sorrow. The true way of covenanting is, to take up the covenant of grace as a free promise of life and salvation, upon condition of Christ's

obedience and death performed already; to believe that promise with particular application to the sinner himself, i. e. that the sinner believe, that he shall have life and salvation, pardon of sin, repentance, sanctification, grace, and glory, and that upon the ground of Christ's obedience and satisfaction only, Heb. 8:10. Thus the covenant is held out, as a free and absolute promise, to sinners indefinitely, like a rope to a company of drowning men, that whoever believes it may by it be drawn forth out of the waters. We proceed to consider,

THIRDLY, The party contracted and undertaken for in this covenant. And as the party-contractor was a representative, so the party-contracted for was represented by him. And that these two, the represented and the contracted for, are of equal latitude, is plain from the nature of the thing: for those whom one represents in a covenant, he contracts for in that covenant; and those for whom one contracts in a covenant, made with him as a representative, they are represented by him in that covenant. It is evident also from the relation betwixt the two Adams, the former being a type of the latter. In the first covenant, those whom Adam contracted for, he represented; and those whom he represented, he contracted for: therefore those whom the second Adam contracted for he represented; and whom he represented, he contracted for.

Now, the party represented and contracted for in the covenant of grace by our Lord Jesus Christ, was the elect of mankind; a certain number of the posterity of Adam chosen from eternity to everlasting life, Heb. 2:11, 12, 13. In their person it was that he stood in making this bargain with his Father, in their name it was that he acted when he struck hands with the Father, as a surety to obey the law, and satisfy justice. And that these only could be so represented by him in this covenant, as being the objects of election, is evident from the last discourse, on the doctrine of election.

It will be proper, therefore, to shew how the elect were considered in this covenant and federal representation. They come under a

threefold consideration, as sinners, as impotent sinners, and as objects of the divine love.

1. As sinners rained in Adam, lost sheep of the house of Israel, Matth. 15:24. In the first covenant God put all the flock of mankind under the hand of one shepherd, Adam. But he lost all the flock, and was never able to recover them again. God from all eternity had put a secret mark on some of them, whereby he distinguished them from the rest, 2 Tim. 2:19. He saw them among the rest, gone from their pasture, wandering like poor waifs and strays, a prey to every devourer. And he proposeth a new covenant, whereby they might be put under the hand of Christ as their shepherd, to be by him sought out and brought back. And this our Lord Jesus accepted, though he well knew what it would cost him to save the lost sheep.

2. As impotent, and utterly unable to help themselves, in whole or in part, Rom. 5:6. They were debtors, and utterly unable to pay one farthing of their debt; and criminals, and quite unable to bear their own punishment to the satisfaction of justice. Had it lain on them to have paid the debt or borne the punishment, they behoved for ever to have sunk under the load. Then said the Son of God, 'I cannot see them perish; Father, I put myself in their room, I will answer for them; I will pay their debt, and bear their punishment; I will be the debtor and criminal in law reckoning, as representing the criminals and debtors.' The representation is sustained, the payment of all is laid on him, and is looked for from no other hand, in whole or in part, either by the one or other party contracting, Isa. 63:3. Psal. 69:4. Yet,

3. As objects of eternal love, sovereign and free, given to Christ by his Father. The Father loved them, John 17:23 and therefore gave them to Christ, ver. 6. The Son loved them, Eph. 5:2 and accepts of the gift, and represents them in the covenant, as a Father does his children, Isa. 9:6 with Heb. 2:13. This absolutely free love, and mere good pleasure, was the reason why they, and not others in the same condemnation by the breach of the first covenant, were represented

by Christ in the second covenant; why their names were put in the eternal contract, when the names of others were left out, Luke 10:21. They were his Father's choice and his choice; and so he became their representative*.

II. The second general head is to consider the parts of this covenant. These are the things agreed upon betwixt God and Christ, as the second Adam, and representative of the elect in the covenant. They may be taken up in two things, the condition of the covenant, and the promises thereof. I shall consider each distinctly.

FIRST, The condition of the covenant. The condition of a covenant or bargain is that part of it, upon the performance of which one's right to the benefit promised is founded, his plea for it is established, as becoming due to him for his performance, according to the agreement betwixt the parties. For instance, the paying of such a sum of money, for such a commodity, according to the agreement of the parties bargaining, is the condition of a covenant commerce, sale, or traffic; and the working of such a piece of work, or doing of such a deed, for such a reward, agreed upon by the parties, is the condition of a covenant of service or hire.

There is also what is called a condition of connection or order in a covenant, whereby one thing necessarily goes before another in the order of a covenant, without being the ground on which one's right and title to that other thing is founded. As in the former instances, the buyer's receiving of the commodity, and the hireling's receiving of the reward, covenanted or bargained for, must needs go before the possession or enjoyment of them: but it is evident, that receiving is not the thing on which the buyer's right and title to the reward is founded: therefore, though it may be called a condition of connection in the respective covenants, yet it cannot in any propriety of speech be called the condition of these covenants.

Thus in the order of the covenant of grace, the having of the Spirit must go before faith, faith before justification, justification before

sanctification, and holiness before heaven's happiness. These may be called conditions in the covenant of grace, viz. conditions of certain connection; and belong to the established order of the promises of the covenant, which are contradistinguished to the condition of the covenant. But such conditions can in no proper sense be called the condition or conditions of the covenant.

This being premised, we say, that the condition of the covenant of grace, properly so called, is Christ's fulfilling all righteousness, owing unto God by the elect, in virtue of the covenant of works, and that as the last Adam, their head and representative. And here I shall,

1. Evince this to be the condition of the covenant.
2. Explain and unfold that righteousness, the fulfilling whereof was made the condition of the covenant.

FIRST, I am to evince that this is the condition of the covenant of grace. This will appear, if ye consider,

1. Christ's fulfilling all righteousness in the second Adam, is what the Father proposed unto Christ as the terms of the elect's salvation, and upon which he founded his promise of eternal life to them; and not any work or deed of theirs, Isa. 53:10, 11. And says Christ, This cup is the new testament in my blood; as if he had said, All the promises of the covenant were written with my blood, it was the condition which procured them, and without which ye had never obtained them. And accordingly this is what Christ, as the second Adam, did from eternity consent to, undertake, and bind himself for, and in time did perform, Matth. 3:15. 'It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness,' as it becomes a person of honour and credit to fulfil his bargain. Luke 24:26. 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?' viz. as one ought to perform the condition of a covenant or bargain he has agreed to.

Object. But the elect's believing, holiness, and good works, were also fixed as terms of their salvation: and Christ undertook also that they

should believe, &c.

Ans. Then at that rate Christ performed the chief part of the condition of the covenant, and took it wholly on himself; but they perform another part of the condition, for which he became their cautioner. Thus the condition of the covenant of grace is divided betwixt Christ and the impotent beggarly creature: and so must the glory of their salvation be; for whosoever works part of the work, or pays a part of the price, without question so much of the reward and purchase is due to him. But none of the glory of it is due to us, 1 Cor. 1:31. Zech. 6:13. Rom. 4:4, 5.; and therefore no part of the condition is performed by us. I own these things are secured in the covenant; but they are secured not in the conditional part of the covenant, but in the promissory part of it, Heb. 8:10.

2. This, and nothing done by the sinner himself, is that upon which a sinner's right to eternal life is founded: upon nothing else can he safely found his plea before the Lord for life and salvation. And a sinner thoroughly convinced will find it so, Rom. 3:24, 25. Eph. 1:7. Phil. 3:9. The sinner standing trembling in the court of conscience, by faith gets under the covert of the Mediator's righteousness, and dare oppose nothing to the sentence of the law, but Christ's fulfilling all righteousness, giving up all other pleas for life and salvation. And believing is the pleading itself upon that ground, not the ground of the plea. It saith, 'My Lord and my God,' in the promise, upon the ground of Christ's fulfilling all righteousness only, as the condition of the covenant.

3. This is that alone by which the salvation of sinners becomes due or a debt. Now, it is not a debt to them; therefore they fulfil no part of the condition: but unto Christ; therefore he performed the proper condition of the covenant; for he who fulfils the condition of a covenant, the reward is of debt to him, Rom. 4:4, 6 compare 1 John 2:1. 2 Thess. 1:6, 7. We may see this even in the first Adam's covenant, the condition whereof was perfect active obedience. Which if it had been fulfilled by Adam, eternal life to him and his would

thereupon have become due or a debt to him. And hence it is, that Christ's fulfilling all righteousness is the believer's only plea for life and salvation: even as in case Adam had performed the condition of his covenant, the plea of all his posterity for life would have been founded on that performance solely, as being the only obedience that was the condition of that covenant; their personal obedience, at least after the performance of the former, being the accomplishment of the promise of the covenant, not of the condition. And so they would have had life, not for any personal deed or work of theirs, but freely, for the obedience of the first Adam, to which he did graciously make the promise of life in the first covenant.

4. Lastly, The covenant of grace doth so exclude our boasting as the covenant of works did not, Rom. 3:27. But if any deed or work of our own be the condition of the covenant of grace in whole or in part, our boasting is not excluded; for life and salvation is of or by the fulfilling of the condition of the covenant, Rom. 4:4 and so far as life and salvation is of or by any work of ours, there is room for our boasting, Eph. 2:9 even as in the covenant of works, wherein life was by our works, not in the way of proper merit, but only by virtue of paction or covenant*.

SECONDLY, I shall explain and unfold that righteousness, the fulfilling of which was the condition of the covenant of works. And that we may have the more distinct view of it, I shall shew,

1. The parts of that righteousness.

2. The character which, upon his Father's call, the Lord Jesus took upon himself, in the covenant, in order to his accepting and performing the condition of the covenant for his people.

First, I am to shew the parts of that righteousness, the fulfilling whereof was made the condition of the covenant. And forasmuch as Christ undertook the performing of that condition in the room and stead of his spiritual seed, the debt of righteousness was and must be

stated from the law or broken covenant of works, which they were lying under. For the law or covenant of works was so far from being neglected in the new bargain, that whatever it had to charge upon or demand of the elect for life and salvation, was summed up and set down in the new covenant, and the full and complete payment thereof made the condition of that covenant, Isa. 42:21. Psal. 69:4. This may from thence be summed up in these three things, holiness of nature, righteousness of life, and satisfaction for sin, which make the whole of the condition of the covenant of grace, the price of the redemption of an elect world, which Christ the second Adam undertook from eternity, to accomplish in himself, in their name, room, and stead.

1. Holiness of nature. That the law required as a term of enjoying eternal life, condemning original sin and corruption of nature as well as of life, saying, 'Thou shalt not covet.' For God being essentially and necessarily holy, nothing can be so contrary to him as an unholy nature. But Christ's spiritual seed were as unable to reach this holiness of nature, as any of their brethren of Adam's family; their nature was corrupt, and it was quite beyond their power to purify it, Prov. 20:9. Wherefore, that the law might be satisfied in this point, it was settled as a condition of the covenant, That the second Adam representing them should be a man of a perfectly holy, pure, and untainted nature, fully answering for them that holiness and perfection of nature required by the law. It consists of two articles.

(1.) That he as the second Adam should be conceived and born holy, for and instead of his spiritual seed, conceived and born in sin.

(2.) That he should inviolably retain the holiness of nature for them, and in their name*.

2. Righteousness of life. This also the law required as one of the terms of life. The law given to Adam and all his seed, which they were obliged to obey in all points, by the tie of natural duty, and by covenant for life, was never fulfilled by them; and Christ's spiritual

seed as well as others fell short of it, Rom. 3:23. The first Adam began the course of obedience, but he quickly fell off from it, and all his natural seed in him. But the justice of God, and the honour of his law, could not suffer the reward, the prize, the crown of eternal life, to be bestowed without running the race. The elect having no ability for running that race, it was made a condition of the second covenant, that Christ as a public person, their representative, should begin and perfect the course of obedience to the law in righteousness of life. This may be taken up in these three articles.

(1.) That he, at the second Adam, should, in the name of those represented by him, obey the whole law.

(2.) That every part of that obedience of his should be screwed up to the highest pitch and degree.

(3.) That all this should be continued to the end, without the least failure in one jot of parts or degrees of obedience*.

3. Satisfaction for sin, Isa. 53:10. The former two were in the condition of Adam's covenant; but this was not: for their being no sin, no satisfaction was due. But the new covenant, supposing the first to be broken, behoved to be settled on the condition of a satisfaction, in virtue of the justice of God, and of his truth, who had annexed a penalty to the breach of the covenant of works. And in this part of the condition of the covenant the following articles were settled.

(1.) That Christ, as a public person should satisfy for all comprehended in the covenant, all and every one of his spiritual seed, Isa. 53:6.

(2.) That he should satisfy for them, by suffering for them, and in their name and stead, Heb. 9:22.

(3.) That he should by suffering satisfy for them fully and completely, that the law might have no need to come back on them for any part

of the satisfaction due.

(4.) That he should suffer the same punishment that they should have suffered in virtue of the penalty of the broken covenant of works, from which this debt of satisfaction was stated; and that was death in its full latitude and extent.

(5.) That he should suffer all this voluntarily, submissively, and out of regard to the wronged honour of God, willingly repairing it[†].

Secondly, I shall shew the character which, upon his Father's call, our Lord took upon himself, in the covenant, in order to his accepting and performing the condition of the covenant for his people. Jesus Christ, the second Adam, hath a manifold relation to the covenant, as he is called the covenant itself: but here I meddle only with those relations to it which concerned the condition; and shall take them up in this threefold character, their kinsman Redeemer in the covenant, the Surety of the covenant, and the Priest thereof.

1. Christ became the kinsman Redeemer in the covenant, Job 19:25. And there were four things which the kinsman Redeemer was to do for his kinsman, which he was not able to do for himself; all which Christ took upon him in the conditionary part of the covenant.

(1.) He was to marry the widow of the deceased kinsman, to raise up seed to his brother, Ruth 3:9 compared with Ezek. 16:8. So our kinsman Redeemer undertook in this covenant to marry the widow, to take on man's nature in the fulness of time, marrying it to himself in a personal union with the divine nature.

(2.) He was to redeem the mortgaged inheritance of his poor kinsman, Lev. 25:25. Heaven and eternal life is the mortgaged inheritance. Our kinsman Redeemer took the burden of the redemption on himself, and agreed to pay the price of the purchase.

(3.) He was to redeem his poor kinsman, brought into bondage, paying his ransom, Lev. 25:47. Sinners had lost their freedom, and become slaves to sin and Satan. Our kinsman Redeemer agreed to give himself for them, for purchasing their liberty, 1 Tim. 2:5, 6.

(4.) He was to avenge the blood of the slain kinsman on the slayer, Deut. 19:12. All mankind was slain, and the elect of God among the rest. Our kinsman Redeemer undertook the avenging of their blood on Sin and Satan*.

2. Christ became the Surety of the Covenant. This the scripture expressly teacheth, Heb. 7:22. What suretyship is among men, many have known to their cost, to the ruin of themselves and their families. It is a man's taking on himself the person of another in law, and binding and obliging himself to answer for what can be legally demanded of that other person. Against rash undertaking of this Solomon cautioneth, Prov. 11:15. It is twofold; suretyship by way of satisfaction for debt contracted, (Prov. 21:26), by the party whom one is surety for; and suretyship by way of caution for some deed to be performed by the party for whom one is surety, Prov. 20:16. 'Take his garment that is surety for a stranger; and take a pledge of him for a strange woman;' that is, lest they will not perform, and the cautioner will be left in the lurch. Here I shall enquire, for whom and for what Christ became Surety in the covenant.

1st, For whom Christ became Surety in the covenant. Possibly it may be safely said, that Christ became God's Surety to us in the covenant, taking on himself to see all the promises of the covenant performed to the seed, even to all believers. For in the case of one unknown to us, though in himself most faithful, a surety may be necessary, especially if the party be of a jealous and suspicious temper. It is certain that God's promises are, in respect of his infallible veracity, most sure and firm, and cannot miss to be performed: but sinners are slow to believe, Luke 24:25. And if Christ be Surety for God unto us, it is for the same end that God has given his oath in the case, Heb. 6:17, 18.

But I doubt if the scripture calls Jesus Christ a Surety in that sense. In Heb. 7:22 the only text wherein Christ is expressly called a Surety, it is undeniable that the suretyship respects his priestly office, ver. 20 with 22 and therefore his suretyship for us to God: whereas his suretyship for God to us cannot relate to his priestly office, but to his kingly office, in respect of which all power is given to him in heaven and earth, and consequently a power to see that all the promises be performed to his people. In two other texts only, we read of suretyship relating to the case between God and a soul; and in both the suretyship is not to, but for the soul, viz. Psal. 119:122. 'Be surety for thy servant for good,' Job 17:3. 'Put me in a surety with thee.' The original expression is the same in the latter text as in the former. Whatever is of this, one thing is plain, that it doth not belong to the condition of the covenant, but to the promises of it; and therefore lies not here before us.

But Christ became our Surety to God in the covenant. Thus was he most properly, if not the only, Surety of the covenant. The covenant of grace was made with the spiritual seed in Christ, as their head and representative, and their Surety taking burden for them upon himself, Psal. 89:19.

2dly, For what he became surety. This will appear by considering the nature of his suretyship. I spoke before of two kinds of suretyship. It was the first, the heaviest of the two, that our Lord undertook, viz. suretyship in the way of satisfaction for debt contracted, wherein the burden was wholly devolved on himself, and he was to be the sole actor and sufferer. The debt of the elect world was, by God's eternal foreknowledge, stated from the broken covenant of works, in the whole latitude of its demands on them: and Christ became surety for it, and so did strike hands with his Father from eternity, to pay it completely. And,

(1.) He became surety for their debt of punishment, which they as sinners were liable in payment of, as the original phrase is, 2 Thess. 1:9. That was the debt owing to the divine justice for all and every

one of their breaches of the holy law, whether original or actual. The demerit of their sins was an infinite punishment, as being committed against an infinite God. They were liable to bear the pains of death in the full latitude of it; to suffer the force of revenging wrath, to the full satisfaction of infinite justice, and reparation of God's honour. This debt of theirs, Christ became Surety for, engaging his life for their life, which was lost in law, where there was not the least hope of escape, Psal. 40:6, 7 with John 10:18. In this suretyship there was an exchange of persons in law, which sovereign grace did admit, when it might have been insisted that the souls that sinned should die. And in virtue thereof Christ himself became debtor in law, bound to pay that debt which he contracted not, Psal. 69:4. And there was a double translation made on Christ in the covenant, from the elect, with his own consent, as a foundation in law and justice for exacting the elect's debt of him.

[1.] Their guilt was transferred on him, Isa. 53:6. All the sins of all the elect were at once imputed to him, and so became his, as his righteousness became ours, viz. in law-reckoning, 2 Cor. 5:21. So that though he was absolutely without sin inherent, he was not without sin imputed to him, till in his resurrection he got up the discharge, Heb. 9 ult. having done them away, and cleared the debt by his death.

[2.] The curse due to them for their sins was transferred on him, Gal. 3:13. The sentence of the law binding them over to bear the revenging wrath of God for all their sins, till justice should be satisfied, was with his own consent laid upon him. And in virtue hereof his blessed body was hanged on a tree, and the sentence of the broken law, Gen. 2:17 was executed on that body and holy soul, Gal. 3:13.

O heavy, yet happy exchange! heavy for Christ the Surety, but happy for poor sinners. Here is what is got on either hand by the exchange of the persons of Christ and his redeemed ones. All the sins of the redeemed are charged on Christ, for the satisfaction of justice by

suffering for them: and all Christ's righteousness, for life and salvation, is reckoned on their score, 2 Cor. 5:21. The curse of the law comes on him for their sake: and the blessing of the gospel comes on them for his sake, Gal. 3:13, 14.

(2.) He became Surety for their debt of duty and obedience, Matth. 3:15. The law as a covenant of works, though it was broken by sinners, who thereby had incurred the penalty, neither lost its right, nor ceased to exact the obedience which at first it required of man, as the condition of life. The sinner was still bound to perfect obedience, and on no less or lower terms could have eternal life, Luke 10:28. The paying of the debt of punishment might satisfy as to the penalty of the bond: but there is yet more behind for him who will meddle in the affairs of the broken company. How shall the principal sum contained in the original contract be paid, the debt of obedience to the law for life and salvation? The honour of God could not allow the quitting of it: and they were absolutely unable to pay one mite of it, that was current in heaven, Rom. 5:6. Eph. 2:1. They were quite as incapable for the doing part, as the suffering part. So Christ became Surety for this debt of theirs too, the debt of obedience to the law as a covenant, which was and is the only obedience for life and salvation to the sons of men. Whatever the law can demand of them in this kind, holiness of nature or righteousness of life, he strikes hands for the payment of it, Psal. 40:7, 8.

And here also there was an exchange of persons in law, as to Christ and the elect, he sustaining their person in the eye of the law, sisting himself for them to answer for every item of this debt, as their Surety. And in virtue thereof he became the law's debtor for that obedience which was owing to it by the elect: which debt he owned to be lying upon him by his circumcision, Luke 2:21 compared with Gal. 5:3*.

(3.) Christ became the Priest of the covenant, Heb. 7:20, 21, 22, 28. He undertook that office, and put on that character, at his Father's call, Heb. 5:4, 5, 6 to the end that he might perform the condition of

the covenant. A priest is a public person, who deals with an offended God, in the name of a guilty company, for reconciliation, by sacrifice which he offereth to God upon an altar, Heb. 5:1 being thereto called of God, that he may be accepted. So a priest speaks a relation to an altar, an altar to a sacrifice, and a sacrifice to sin. Here I shall inquire, for whom Christ became a Priest, and what need there was of his becoming a Priest in this covenant.

1st, For whom he became a Priest. He became a Priest for sinners, Heb. 8:1. Where there is no sin, there is no need of a priesthood: So Christ's priesthood speaks men to be guilty creatures, needing an atonement and reconciliation. And he became a Priest for those sinners whose names were in the covenant, and them only, that is, for the elect, whose names are written in heaven: for being the Priest of the covenant, he must be their Priest, and theirs only, who were comprehended in the covenant. In a word, he became the Priest of the spiritual Israel in the covenant, that Israel for whose behoof the covenant was made[†].

2dly, What need was there of Christ's becoming a Priest in this covenant. The necessity of it will appear in these four things.

(1.) They were sinners, and there could not be a new covenant made without provision for removing of their sin; and that required a priest, and one that was able to remove sin, and repair the injured honour of God. And such a one was Christ.

(2.) Sin could not be removed, without a sacrifice of sufficient value, which they were not able to afford. The new covenant was a covenant by sacrifice, Psal. 50:5 and it could not be obtained without sacrifice; it behoved necessarily to be written in blood, Heb. 9:22. Christ becoming a priest, gave himself a sacrifice, for establishing the covenant, Eph. 5:2 and so it is the New Testament in his blood, shed for the remission of the sins of many.

(3.) No sacrifice could be accepted, but on such an altar as should sanctify the gift to the effect of the removing of sin. And who could furnish that but the Son of God himself, whose divine nature was the altar, from whence the sacrifice of the human nature derived its value and efficacy, as infinite, Heb. 9:14.

(4.) There behoved to be a priest to offer this sacrifice, this valuable sacrifice unto God upon that altar: else there could have been no sacrifice to be accepted, and so no removal of sin, and so no new covenant. And who could that be but the Son of God only? Since himself was the sacrifice, and himself the altar, he himself alone could be the Priest*.

Inf. From all that has been said on the head of the condition of the covenant, ye see the price of sinners' salvation, the ransom of souls, the only valuable plea that a sinner can have for mercy, namely, the condition of the covenant performed by the Mediator. Let it be the great concern of your life, to be interested in it in a saving manner, as reckoned of God to have been performed for you. If it be not reckoned on your account, what will it avail you for life and salvation? Be concerned then for the imputation of that righteousness unto you. It is offered in the gospel unto you, that the holiness of Christ's nature, the righteousness of his life, and the satisfaction of his death, shall be yours, yours freely, as a free gift of righteousness, believe it, and lay your souls' weight on it by faith, and it shall be imputed to you.

SECONDLY, We proceed now to consider the second part of the covenant of grace, viz. the promise. This covenant is a proper covenant: and in it there is a promissory part, answering to the conditional part which we have now explained. And it is God's part of the covenant, as the other was the Mediator's part; and is that which our text, I have made a covenant with my chosen, doth principally and expressly bear; compare ver. 4. 'Thy seed will I establish for ever.' The promise of the covenant is the bond of promise, whereby God has obliged himself to give the benefits

specified in the covenant, and to make them forthcoming, upon the consideration of the performance of the condition. And forasmuch as the condition performed by Christ was strictly meritorious of the benefits promised, the promise is firm and binding, not only in respect of the truth and faithfulness of God, Tit. 1:2.; but also in respect of his justice, 2 Tim. 4:8 which requires the Mediator's obedience to be rewarded according to the promise made in the covenant.

Of what weight and importance the promissory part of the covenant is, will appear by these considerations.

1. The covenant of grace hath its name from this part of it, Eph. 2:12. It is called, 'covenants of promise.'
2. The covenant itself is by the Holy Ghost described as a cluster of free promises of grace and glory to poor sinners, without any mention of any condition, Heb. 8:10, 11, 12.
3. The promises of the covenant are the purchase of Christ's blood, the fruit of his fulfilling all righteousness in his birth, life, and death.
4. The great design and end of the covenant is accomplished in the performance of the promissory part of the covenant: and that is the glory of God, and the salvation of sinners, Rev. 10:7.
5. The happiness and comfort of all God's elect, for time and eternity, depends on the promises of the covenant, Tit. 1:2.
6. The glory of the man Christ, as Mediator of the covenant depends on the promise of the covenant.
7. God has sworn the promise of the covenant, Psal. 89:3. Heb. 6:17.*

For clearing of this weighty point, we shall consider the promises of the covenant in general, and then take a more particular view of them.

FIRST, I am to shew what are the promises of the covenant of grace in general. They are promises made by God himself in that covenant, upon the consideration of Christ's fulfilling the condition of the covenant, as the onerous cause thereof, whereby he has secured all happiness to the elect, after Adam and his children had lost it by the breach of the first covenant, and hath also secured all means leading thereunto. These promises, in respect of the parties on whom they have their direct and immediate effect, are of two sorts.

1. Some of them have their direct and immediate effect on Christ himself, the head of the covenant, who in his own person performed the condition of it; such as the promises of assistance in his work, of a numerous offspring to be given him, and a name above every name, as the reward of his work, Heb. 12:2.

2. Some of them have their direct and immediate effect on Christ's spiritual seed and members, comprehended with him in the same covenant; such as the promises of the new heart, regeneration, cleansing from the defilement of sin, &c.

SECONDLY, To whom the promises are made. We may take up this point in these two things.

First, The promises of the first sort, viz. those that have their direct and immediate effect on the person of Christ, were made to Christ himself, Isa. 49:7. And they were made to him as head of the covenant, the second Adam, the representative of his spiritual seed.

Secondly, The promises of the second sort, viz. those that have their direct and immediate effect on Christ's spiritual seed, the elect, are made to Christ primarily, and to the seed secondarily. They are made to both, but first to the head, then to the members through him.

1. They are primarily and chiefly made to Christ. Though they have their immediate effect on the elect, they are made immediately and chiefly to him. This appears by several documents from the word of God.

1st. The express testimony of the apostle, Gal. 3:16. 'Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made,—and to thy seed, which is Christ.'

2dly, Christ is by the covenant constituted heir of all things, Psal. 89:27. Heb. 1:2. And that must needs be in virtue of the promise of the covenant, which he purchased by his fulfilling the covenant.

3dly, As God promised life in the covenant of works to Adam's children upon condition of his perfect obedience, which is evident from death coming on them by his disobedience; so he hath promised life in the covenant of grace to Christ's spiritual seed, upon condition of his obedience.

4thly, All the promises that have their direct and immediate effect on the elect, are a part of the reward made over to Jesus Christ in the covenant, Heb. 12:2 compared with Isa. 53:10. They are all the price of blood to him, the purchase of his obedience and death, and therefore called the new testament in his blood.

This is a point of great weight, and serves both to inform our minds and direct our practice. For hence may fairly be inferred,

(1.) That the promises are not made to the believer's good works, but to Christ's works, and to the working believer in and through him, Rom. 4:4. They are absolutely free to the believer, and not of debt to him, and therefore are not made to his works.

(2.) That the free grace whereby the dead elect are quickened, and made to believe, and unite with Christ, is conveyed to them in the way and sure tenor of a promise, as well as the grace that follows faith, Ezek. 36:26.

(3.) The way to be personally and savingly interested in the promises of the covenant for time and eternity is to embrace Christ by faith, and thereby unite with him, 2 Cor. 1:20.

(4.) When through deadness and darkness of Spirit, or some conscience wasting guilt, the faith of the promise is failed in you, and ye cannot fasten your hold upon it again, because ye see no good in yourselves, embrace Christ again, and the promise in him, notwithstanding all your first unworthiness and guilt, and stand not off from the promises till you be in better case, Psal. 65:3.

(5.) The true way to plead the promises is, to plead them through Jesus Christ, to plead the accomplishment of them to ourselves for his sake, to come to God in the name of Christ, and to crave the fulfilling of the promises, John 16:23, 24.

(6.) Lastly, This may confirm and strengthen the faith of believers as to the accomplishment of the promises to them.

2. These promises are made to the elect, Christ's seed, secondarily, in and through Christ, 2. Tim. 1:9. As he has the chief and fundamental interest in them, so they have a derived interest in them through him, in respect of their legal and mystical union with him*.

Let us therefore take heed to ourselves, lest standing off from the free promise of life in Christ, we go about to seek our salvation another way. Let us be denied to all confidence in our own works, as we would not thrust ourselves into the room of Christ, and so he become of no effect to us.

[The author next proceeds to take a particular view of the promises of the covenant of grace, which he treats of as peculiar to Christ, and as common to his spiritual seed; for all which we must refer the reader to his View of the Covenant of Grace, under the titles, Of the promises peculiar to Christ, and, Of the promise of eternal life to the elect, considered in three periods; where they are handled more largely than in this work.]

III. The next general head is, to consider the administration of the covenant of grace. Since this covenant is that which the salvation of the whole spiritual seed depends on, and according to it all the

dispensations of God towards them, for carrying on and completing that love design, are regulated; and since it was withal a compact entered into betwixt the Father and the Son before the world began, and so in itself a great secret, Psal. 25:14.; it is necessary that there be an administration of it, whereby it may be rendered effectual, for the behoof of those in whose favour it was entered into. Wherefore the administration of it was devolved on Christ, the second Adam: and he hath it as one of his prerogatives, by the covenant itself, made over to him in the promissory part of the covenant, particularly by the promise of a glorious reward of his work in fulfilling the condition, John 5:27. It was for this cause the last Adam was made a quickening spirit, as saith our second text. And so he is 'given for a covenant of the people,' Isa. 49:8.; which imports the constituting him Administrator of the covenant, whereby the people, any people, Jews or Gentiles, may become God's people, and receive all the benefits of that covenant-relation to God.

Now, that Christ is, by the authority of heaven, constituted or made the covenant, imports these two things.

1. He is constituted and settled, by the authority of his Father, Administrator of the covenant. As he had the burden of purchasing the promised benefits, so he has the honour of distributing them, according to the measures laid down in the eternal purpose of God, with respect to the conferring of these benefits. None of the benefits of the covenant are to be had, but out of his hand: he received them from his Father, and sinners must receive them from him. That this is the meaning of this phrase, is evident from the following words, declaring the end of his being given for a covenant of the people: 'To establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages,' ver. 9 compare chap. 42:6, 7. 'That thou mayst say to the prisoners, Go forth.'

2. The whole of the covenant is in him. An administrator of one's goods must have them in his custody; he must have a power over them, as Joseph, who was to furnish the people corn, had all the

granaries of Egypt at his command. Our Lord Jesus is such an Administrator of the covenant, as has the whole of the covenant in himself: so that he who has Christ has the covenant; and he that has not Christ has no saving part or lot in it.

For opening of the administration of the covenant devolved on Christ, we shall consider these three things, the objects, the ends, and the nature of this administration.

FIRST, who are the objects of this his administration, the parties to whom he is impowered, by commission from his Father, to administer the covenant. The elect only were the parties represented by the second Adam; and to them only is the administration of the covenant effectual to their salvation. But mankind-sinners indefinitely are the objects of the administration. The extent of it is not founded on election, but on the sufficiency of Christ's obedience and death for the salvation of all; nor is it regulated by election, but by the fulness of power in heaven and earth given to Christ as the reward of his work, his obedience even unto death.

To confirm this truth, which is glad tidings for all sinners of Adam's race, hearing that Christ is empowered by commission to give them, and every one of them the covenant, and all the benefits of it, to their eternal salvation, the following things may be considered.

1. The grant made of Christ by the Father, as the ordinance of God for the salvation of lost sinners of mankind. When the Israelites were in the wilderness, many of them were bitten by fiery serpents: in that case God instituted an ordinance for their cure, viz. a brazen serpent lifted up on a pole. And he made a grant of it to all who would use it for that purpose of healing, for which it was appointed of him, by looking to it, without excepting any that needed healing, Numb. 21:28. So all mankind being bitten by the old serpent the devil, and sin as his deadly poison left in them; God has appointed Jesus Christ the ordinance of Heaven for their salvation, and has made a grant of him as such, to all of Adam's lost posterity who will make use of him

for that purpose, by looking to him in the way of believing, without excepting in this grant any, if they are but of the world of mankind, John 3:14, 15, 16.

2. The Mediator's commission for the administration is conceived in most ample terms, Luke 4:18, 19. Isa. 61:1, 2. He is to administer the covenant, not only to the meek, poor, broken-hearted, but to the captives, the blind, bruised, prisoners, slaves, and broken men who have sold their inheritance. What sort of sinners can one imagine to be excepted here? These terms are too general to admit of any exception as to sinners of mankind.

3. The ample powers given him as Administrator of the covenant. All power in heaven and in earth is granted to him, Matth. 28:18. So there is none on earth excepted from his administering the covenant to them; the indemnity which the Father has put in the hands of his own Son to dispense, hath no excepted persons of mankind in it, but he is to dispense it to any of them all whom he will, John 5:21, 22. And it is remarkable, that upon this fulness of power committed to the Administrator of the covenant, the general offer of the gospel is founded, Mat. 11:27, 28, and 28:18, 19. All without exception are declared welcome to come and suck of these full breasts of divine consolations contained in the covenant.

4. His executing of his commission in an unhampered manner, administering the covenant indifferently to any sinners of mankind; not this or that party of them, under this or the other denomination, but mankind in general, Prov. 8:4. So the gospel in which the covenant is administered, is good tidings to all people, Luke 2:10; and the gospel-feast is made unto all people, Isa. 25:6. Accordingly he gives his apostles commission in most ample terms, than which one cannot imagine more extensive, Mark 16:15. 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.'

5. Consider to whom Christ stands related as a Saviour by office. He is the Saviour of the body only, Eph. 5:23 being considered as

actually saving from sin and wrath. But considered as an official Saviour, he is the Saviour of the world, as he is expressly called, 1 John 4:14. John 4:42. And his salvation is called the 'common salvation,' Jude 3.

6. Lastly, If it were not so, then there would be some of mankind-sinners excepted, for whom there would be no manner of warrant to believe in Christ, or take hold of the covenant, more than there is for devils: which is contrary to the scriptures, John 3:16. Mark 16:15*.

USE. Know ye then that our Lord Jesus is empowered to administer the covenant of grace to you, and each one of you. There is a Saviour provided for you, to whom you have a right, and to whom you may have access for life and salvation. Ye have heard much of the promised benefits of the covenant: let none say, they are excluded from them. On the contrary, whatever ye are or have been, your name is in Christ's commission for administering the covenant: and ye must either take that covenant, or perish as despisers of it.

SECONDLY, What are the ends of this administration, or the business thus put into Christ's hand.

1. To bring sinners into the covenant personally and savingly, Isa. 49:5.

2. When they are brought in, to be the sole manager of them, according to the covenant, till death, John 5:22.

3. To complete the happiness of his covenant-people, according to the covenant, in another world, Eph. 5:27. Col. 1:22.

These are the ends of this administration committed to Jesus Christ; this is the work that he hath to do as administrator of the covenant. And the putting it in his hand was a method of grace at once adapted to the glory of God the offended party, the comfort and safety of sinners who had given the offence, and the honour of the Mediator the glorious Peace maker*.

THIRDLY, I come to consider the nature of this administration. And hereof we may have a view, by observing Christ's relations to the covenant, in which he stands as Administrator of it. We have seen already, that Jesus Christ, as party-contractor on man's side in the covenant, became the Mediator of the covenant, both substantial and official; that with respect to the conditional part of it, he became the kinsman Redeemer in the covenant, the Surety of the covenant, and the Priest, the atoning Priest thereof. It remains that we consider his relations to the covenant as he is Administrator of it, which respects the promissory part thereof. And thus he bears a fivefold relation to the covenant, viz. the Trustee, the Testator, the Prophet, the King, and Intercessor of the covenant; each of which is a syllable of that name above every name, given him of the Father[†].

From what has been said of the administration of the covenant, we make the following inferences.

1. As the covenant is well ordered in itself, so it is well ordered in point of its administration; and so it is ordered in all things, 2 Sam. 23:5. Many a good bargain is marred as to the success of it by mismanagement, through the unskilfulness and unfitness of him into whose hands it is committed. But the covenant is put into the hand of an infallible Administrator, perfectly fit to deal with all concerned therein, and so cannot miss of an issue agreeable to the design of it. Two things are of fatal consequence in such matters. (1.) Unskilfulness; and (2.) Want of power and ability. Through either of these in the manager, a promising contrivance may be marred in the management of it. The administration of the covenant of grace is a matter that requires the utmost skill, considering the difficulty of the thing in itself, and the ill disposition sinners are of with relation to it. But Jesus Christ is infinitely wise, and nothing can escape his foresight or observation, Col. 2:3. He knows well the fit times and seasons, and has 'the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary,' Isa. 50:4. There are many adversaries, set to oppose and counteract the design of the glorious contrivance, the administration of which is put in his hand:

the whole force of hell is banded against it. But he is sufficiently enabled to carry it on over the belly of them all: all power in heaven and in earth being given him. And therefore one may conclude, that when the mystery of God shall be finished, the issue will be found exactly to answer the eternal plan.

2. While the covenant is administered to you, it is Jesus Christ himself with whom you have to do in that matter; he is the great Ambassador of heaven to you and each one of you, in this matter of the covenant, Heb. 12:25. Ye would then look above ministers and ordinances unto himself, and regard them as persons and things by which Jesus Christ himself is treating with you, and regard him as your party with whom ye have to do. If ministers go beyond the bounds of their commission, ye may safely so far disregard what they say or do in that manner: but to fill your hearts with prejudices against them, on account of such and such faults ye espy in them, especially on the account of doing their duty, and so make yourselves very easy as to the ordinances by them administered, and to slight these ordinances under pretence that ye can spend the time otherwise to as great advantage; this is but to look on them as divided in their ministration from Christ, and so to cheat your own souls, 2 Cor. 5:20. Luke 10:16. What God then has joined, it will be dangerous so to put asunder. If ye took Christ himself for the party dealing with you, as indeed he is, it would engage you to take good heed how ye entertain the administration of the covenant among you.

3. They who would partake of the covenant, must come to Christ by faith, Isa. 55:3 for that effect. He has the administration of it in his hand: so it is from him we must get it, with all the benefits and privileges of it. The whole of it is in him; so uniting with him we have it, and only that way we can have it. As is your interest in Christ, so is your interest in the covenant of grace; if he is yours in the way of special interest, your souls being married to him; then the privileges of the covenant are all yours, and the covenant is the security ye have for them, if ye are strangers to Christ, ye are strangers to the

covenant of promise too, and so without hope and without God in the world.

4. Such as are personally entered into the covenant in a saving manner, and would improve the covenant for their daily needs, must still be coming to Christ for that end; since he is the Administrator of it, all the benefits of it are dispensed by his hand, John 1:16. So the life of a Christian comes to be a life of faith: forasmuch as the whole supply afforded them from heaven is benefits of the covenant, and the riches of the covenant are in Christ's hand as Administrator of it; and the way of believing in Christ is the way appointed for receiving them from him. So the more a Christian is in the exercise of faith, the more he employs the Administrator; and the more he employs him, the more liberally he shares of the things of the covenant.

5. Sinners have abundant encouragement and security for their coming into the covenant, by believing in the Lord Jesus. We are not called to come to enter into a covenant with an unvailed God, the rays of whose glory in his holiness, justice and truth, and all his other perfections, might quite damp and dispirit the guilty creature; but as Christ as a second Adam has made the covenant with his Father, and fulfilled it in the whole of the condition thereof required on our part; so it is put in his hand, who is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, to administer it unto any of the family of Adam; and in him we have the whole of it. Here all is ready for us, suited to our case. And we have his word of the gospel for our security, Matth. 22:4 and John 6:37. And well may we trust him, believing the Son, believing his word, since the Father has trusted him with the whole administration of the covenant.

6. Lastly, There is no man who has the offer of Christ made him in the gospel, but if he continue in his sin, and die in it, he will perish with a witness, without all shadow of excuse, John 15:22. The covenant is the contrivance of Heaven for salvation to lost sinners: in the administration of it, none are excluded from the benefit thereof; the net is spread out for even the worst of sinners, wherever the

gospel comes. There is enough in the covenant for the worst of cases; the promises of it are made suitable to the sinner's case, both in respect of sin and of misery; so that whatever is their case, in the covenant there is a suitable cure. And that the sinner may at once lay hold on all, God has given Christ as the covenant to the people, making the embracing of Christ, the short and sure way for the sinner to have all. In him is lodged the quickening Spirit: so that by applying to him we may have life. They must then be left inexcusable who reject the offer of Christ, and will not come to him, that they may have life, John 5:40.

And now having opened to you the doctrine of the covenant of grace, that covenant on which the salvation of our souls depends, in discoursing of the parties in it, the parts of it, and the administration of it, I shall shut up the discourse on this subject, with a twofold use of the whole.

USE I. Of trial. Let every one put the question to himself, What interest have I in this covenant? Are ye personally brought within the covenant of grace in a saving manner, or not?

For your help in this inquiry, I shall offer you some marks or characters of those who by grace are personally instated through faith in the covenant of grace, before the Lord, under Christ the second Adam as their head.

1. They are such as have fled for refuge from the covenant of works to the covenant of grace, Heb. 6:17, 18.
2. They are such as cordially approve of and acquiesce in the plan of the covenant, as suited to the honour of God, and to their case in particular, 2 Sam. 23:5.
3. Having the discovery made to them of the covenant as made from eternity betwixt God and the second Adam, and in the gospel offered to them, they will satisfy themselves with Heaven's draught of it in

their covenanting, so far as they understand it, and not go about to add to it, or diminish from it, Acts 9:6.

4. The love of God in Christ, is habitually predominant in them, Prov. 8:17. 'I love them that love me.'

5. Jesus Christ, the head of the covenant, is their head with their own consent.

6. The condition of the covenant, as fulfilled by Jesus Christ, is the alone ground of their confidence before the Lord, as to acceptance with God for time and eternity, and as to any of all the benefits of the covenant they look to partake of, Phil. 3:3.

7. The promises of the covenant are a satisfying portion to their hearts, 2 Sam. 23:5.

8. The spirit of the covenant is in them; and that is another spirit than what the men of the world are actuated by, Ezek. 36:27.

9. The laws of the covenant are in their hearts the holy law of the ten commandments, the eternal rule of righteousness, Heb. 8:10*.

USE II. Of exhortation to sinners and to saints.

FIRST, Let sinners be exhorted to come into this covenant, by embracing it personally for themselves, so as they may be instated therein to all saving purposes. This covenant is brought to, and set before you in the gospel; so that you and every one of you must either be receivers or refusers of it. O refuse it not, for the refusing is dangerous beyond expression. Take hold of it, and embrace it, for it is your life: come, enter into it without delay. Ye are under the covenant of works, O sinners! where ye can have no life nor salvation. But the door of the new covenant is opened onto you, come, flee from the covenant ye were born under, and are living under; and let the sacred knot be cast this day, by your entering within the bond of the covenant of grace, accepting and embracing

the offered covenant, to the instating of you personally in it, to all the purposes of life and salvation, grace and glory, by it.

But that ye may more clearly perceive the duty ye are called to, and may not walk in the dark, in your aiming at embracing the covenant, and that the motives to it may have the more weight, I shall,

1. Lay before you, by what means it is that a soul embraceth the covenant of grace, and is instated in it effectually to salvation.

2. Offer some motives to press the exhortation on sinners to enter personally into the covenant.

FIRST, I shall lay before you, by what means it is that a soul embraceth the covenant of grace, and is instated in it effectually to salvation. This, in one word, is by faith in Jesus Christ, Acts 16:31. The covenant is held forth in the gospel to you: God saith to every one of you, 'I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.' And to state you in it personally, and to close the bargain with you, to all the intents and purposes of salvation, all that is required of you is to hear, that is, to believe, Isa. 55:3. He that believeth is within the covenant of grace personally and savingly? he that believeth not, is still under the covenant of works, where the first Adam left him. This is the hand that takes hold of the covenant; thereby one signs the covenant for himself, and closes the bargain for his own salvation. This is the mouth of the soul, by which it consents to the covenant; and God becomes your God in covenant, and ye his covenanted people. So when we call you to embrace the covenant, and enter into it personally, all that we call you to is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

That believing on Christ should be the appointed mean of entering sinners into the covenant of grace, is very agreeable to the nature and end of that great transaction. For,

- (1.) Hereby the grace of the covenant is preserved entire in the dispensation of the covenant; and by that means the promise is made

sure to all the seed, Rom. 4:16. Faith is contradistinguished to works, as grace is to debt, Rom. 4:4, 5. If any work or doing of ours were that upon which we were instated in the covenant, and got the right to the promise, then the covenant, and benefits of it, would be of debt to us, contrary to the very design of that method of salvation, which is to exalt the free grace of God, and cut off all boasting. But the nature of faith on Christ is adapted to the exalting of grace, inasmuch as it is a grace purely receiving, not giving; taking all from Christ, without money and without price; laying the stress of the soul's acceptance with God wholly on what Christ has done and suffered; and renouncing entirely all doings and sufferings of our own in that point.

(2.) Hereby the sinner enters into the covenant, by uniting with Christ, who was the representative with whom it was made, John 10:9 and so the unity of the covenant and the representation in it, are preserved. If men entered into the covenant another way, as by accepting such and such properly called terms to them proposed, and promising for themselves the performance of them, the representation in the second covenant is marred, and there would in effect be as many covenants of grace, as there are persons embracing it at different times; at least Christ's covenant would be one, and ours another. But the covenant of grace being made with Christ, as the second Adam, in the name of all such as should be his, it is evident, that the only way of one's personal entering into such a covenant, must be by becoming his, standing related to the head of the covenant, as our head: and it is by faith, and no work or consent of ours differing from faith, that we are united to him, and become members of his body, Eph. 3:17.

But here ariseth a weighty question, necessary to be touched, for clearing your way into the covenant, viz. What is that believing, by which one unites with Christ, and so enters into the covenant of grace? Believing, in the scripture use of the word, is trusting a word, person, or thing. And hence the scripture phrases of believing to, and believing in, i. e. having trust to and in; phrases, however unusual

with us in conversation, yet ordinary both in the Old and New Testament. It is the trusting a word, as to report, Isa. 53:1 in God's words, Psal. 106:12. It is trusting a person: thus the Israelites 'believed the Lord and his servant Moses; Heb. believed in the Lord, and in Moses his servant.' Job 4:18. Heb. 'He believed not in his servants,' i. e. trusted them not. And it is the trusting a thing too, Job 39:12. 'Wilt thou believe him,' viz. the unicorn? Heb. 'believe in him,' i. e. trust in him. Deut. 28:66. Heb. 'Thou shalt not believe in thy life.'—And thence I conclude, that saving faith is, in the general, the trusting of a word, and of a person and thing held forth in that word.

Now, there is a twofold word to be believed by all those who would enter into the covenant of grace in a saving manner, namely, the word of the law, and the word of the gospel. The believing of the former is a faith of the law; and of the latter, a faith of the gospel. The faith of the law is the work of the Spirit of God, as well as the saving faith of the gospel, though wrought by him in a very different manner. The former he works by the law, as a Spirit of conviction and bondage, convincing of sin and misery, Rom. 8:15 with John 16:8. The latter he works by the gospel, as a quickening Spirit, a Spirit of saving illumination and adoption.

Whosoever then would enter into the covenant of grace, must, in the first place, have a faith of the law; which therefore is necessary to be preached to sinners. And by it a man believes three things.

1. That he is a sinner, a breaker of the law's commands, liable to divine vengeance. The law pronounces him a guilty man, and he believes the report of the law concerning himself in particular; and so, by this faith, his heavy and sorrowful heart echoes back to the voice of the law, Guilty, guilty! Rom. 3:19. This faith is a divine faith, founded upon the testimony of God in his holy law; and rests not in the testimony of men, whether spoken or written. The Spirit of God as a Spirit of bondage, brings home the law to the man's conscience, and persuades him, that that law is the voice of the eternal God, and

the voice of that God to him in particular; and so convinces him of sin upon God's own testimony. And thus he believes.

(1.) That his life and conversation is sinful and corrupt, displeasing and hateful in the sight of a holy God, according to the divine testimony, Rom. 3:12. 'They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one.' He believes, what is true, that his omissions and commissions are to him innumerable; his righteousness and unrighteousness are both together sinful and displeasing to a holy God; that he is gone out of the way of God, and is walking in the way of destruction and misery.

(2.) That his heart is full of mischief and iniquity, according to the divine testimony, Jer. 17:9. 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' He sees those hellish lusts there, which he little noticed before. The law shining into the heart, discovers them; and pressing the man, irritates them; so as he believeth, that he has such a mystery of iniquity in his heart, as he could never before believe to be there, Rom. 7:9.

(3.) That his nature is quite corrupted, according to the divine testimony, as one 'dead in trespasses and sins,' Eph. 2:1. And so his soul echoes back to the law's testimony, 'I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me,' Psal. 51:5 crying, Unclean, unclean. He sees that his disease is not accidental, but natural and hereditary; and so that his nature cannot be mended, but must be renewed. And so he believes, not only that he does no good, but that he can do no good. And in all these respects he sees and believes himself to be an object loathsome in the sight of a holy God, loathsome in respect of his life, heart, and nature too.

2. By the law man believes, that he is a lost and undone sinner, under the curse of the law for his sin, Gal. 3:10. He no more looks on the curse of the law as some strange thing, belonging only to some monsters of wickedness, and far from him. But the Spirit of God

brings home the dreadful sentence of that broken law, and applies it close to him, as if he had said, thou art the man. And he groans out his belief thereof under the felt weight thereof, like a man under the sentence of death, Rom. 7:9.

3. By it a man believes, that he is utterly incapable to help himself, and so that he must inevitably perish for ever if he get not help. He believes, that he cannot, by all his doings and sufferings, remove the curse of the law from off him, according to the divine testimony, as being 'without strength,' Rom. 5:6 nor change his own nature, heart, and life, in a right manner, according to that infallible testimony, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil,' Jer. 13:23. He believes himself to be a dead man spiritually; legally dead, and morally dead, as the apostle testifies of himself in that case, Rom. 7:9.

This is the faith of the law: and the effect of it is a legal repentance, whereby the soul is broken and bruised with fear and terror of the wrath of God, grieves and sorrows for sin as a ruining and destructive evil, seriously desires therefore to be freed from it, despairs of salvation by itself, and seriously looks out for relief another way, Acts 2:37 and 16:29, 30. Thus the law is a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ; and the faith of the law makes way for the faith of the gospel. Not that this legal faith or legal repentance is the condition of the soul's welcome to Christ and the covenant of grace; our access to Christ and the covenant is proclaimed free, without any conditions or qualifications required in us to warrant us sinners of mankind to believe in Jesus Christ. But they are necessary to move and excite us to make use of our privilege of free access to Christ and the covenant: so that the sinner will never come to Christ nor embrace the covenant without them.

In calling you then to embrace the covenant, ye are called indirectly, and by consequence to this faith of the law, to believe that ye are

sinner in life, heart, and nature; lost and undone, under the curse; and utterly unable to help yourselves. Yet this is not saving faith.

Saving faith, which unites to Christ, is the faith of the gospel: for the gospel only is the ministration of righteousness, 2 Cor. 3:9. It is in it that the righteousness of faith is revealed unto faith, to be believed, Rom. 1:17. That is the word which gives the sinner the only notice of a Saviour, of the atoning blood, and the new covenant in that blood. And hence it is that it is the only word by which saving faith is begotten in the hearts of lost sinners, Gal. 3:2. In this word of the gospel the Lord Jesus, with all his benefits and covenant, is to be believed on and embraced by faith, Rom. 10:8. And the word of the gospel being received by believing, we have Christ and his covenant, with all the benefits of it; faith being indeed the echo of the quickened soul to the word of grace that bringeth salvation, Mark 1:15. Isa. 53:1. Gal. 3:2 a trusting of the word of the gospel, the person, viz. the Saviour, and the thing therein held forth to us to be believed on for salvation.

This is that believing by which we are united to Christ, and entered into the covenant of grace. So the question being put, how shall I personally enter into the covenant of grace in a saving manner? I answer in the following particulars.

First, You must believe that there is a fulness of salvation in Christ for poor sinners. This is the constant report of the gospel concerning him, Eph. 3:8. Heb. 7:25. He is therein held forth, as an able Saviour, able to save men from their sins, and from the wrath of God. His merit is a sufficient defence against the tempest of fiery wrath that incensed justice is ready to cause to fly forth against transgressors, Isa. 32:2. His spirit is sufficient to sanctify the most unholy, 1 Cor. 6:11. The righteousness he fulfilled as the condition of the covenant is so valuable in itself, and in the eyes of his Father, that it is sufficient to procure justification, sanctification, and all other saving benefits to sinners, who in themselves deserve death and damnation. So that they are happy who are in him, and they shall never perish, but have

everlasting life; and they shall be eternally secure under the covert of his righteousness, as a sufficient defence. Believest thou this?

This is the general faith of the gospel, which, being without particular application, doth not unite the sinner to Christ, nor enter him into the covenant; and may be found in reprobates and fallen angels, as being only an assent in general to the truth of the doctrine of the gospel, Matth. 13:20, 21 and 8:29. But it is necessarily pre-requisite to a faith of particular application, by the nature of the thing; for I must first believe a saying to be true in itself, before I can trust to it for my part; and I must first believe a thing to be good in itself, before I can believe it is good for me. But where this faith is carried forward to uniting with Christ, it issues in an ardent desire of union and communion with Christ, an high esteem of him and his covenant, and a longing for his righteousness, as a hungry man for meat, or a thirsty man for drink.

Secondly, Ye must believe that Jesus Christ, with his righteousness and all his salvation, is by himself offered to sinners, and to you in particular. This is the plain voice of the gospel, Isa. 55:1. Rev. 22:17. Prov. 8:4. But, alas! few believe it; yea, none will believe it to purpose, till the Spirit of the Lord make it plain to them, and persuade them by an inward illumination. Many secure sinners hear the gospel, and are glad of the offer; but they discern not Christ's voice in it; they hear it not as the voice of Christ himself to them, but as the word of men; hence it hath no due authority upon their consciences, and so they pass it over lightly.

But where true faith is a-working, the word of the gospel-offer is by the Holy Spirit inwardly brought home and applied to the soul in particular, with power, as the word of the Lord himself, and not of men, whereby the man is assured that it is the voice of Christ, and to him in particular, 1 Thess. 1:5 and 2:13. And so the man applies it to himself by believing. This is necessary; for without it there can be no receiving of Christ, and the soul can see no solid ground of faith: For it is evident, that there can be no receiving aright, where the sinner

does not believe the offer to be made to him in particular. And here begins the application of faith, an application tending to union with Christ.

Wherefore, if ye would unite with Christ, and so enter into the, covenant of grace, sist yourselves before the Lord as condemned sinners under the curse of the law; and hear and believe the word of the gospel as made to you condemned and cursed sinners in particular. And so it will come to you as the offer of a pardon to one under sentence of death, as the rising sun to one sitting in darkness, and the shadow of death. And let not your heart misgive by unbelief, but believe the offer, to be made to you, as it is indeed, (Isa. 55:3.) by Christ himself.

Thirdly, Ye must believe that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, and your Saviour in particular, by the Father's appointment and his own offer; and that, by the same appointment and offer, his righteousness the condition of the covenant, and eternal life the promise of the covenant, are yours: Yours, I mean not in possession, but in right thereto, so far as ye may lawfully and warrantably take possession of, and use them as your own to all intents and purposes of salvation. Think not this too much for you: it is no more than what is necessary to saving faith in Christ. If you believe only in the general that Christ is the Saviour of the world, and don't believe that he is your Saviour in particular, what do ye believe more than devils do? They believe that he is Jesus a Saviour, Mark 1:24. Ye must needs believe that he is your Saviour, if ye would go beyond them, and consequently that his righteousness and salvation is yours, in the sense before opened; for where Christ is given, all is given with him, Rom. 8:32. How can you take or receive him as your Saviour, if he is not yours indeed? A man may take possession fraudulently indeed of what he does not believe to be his by right: but no man can fairly and honestly claim and take possession of what he does not believe to be his own. Certainly God must first give Christ to us, before we can receive him, John 3:27. Giving on God's part, and receiving on ours, are corelates, and the former must needs go before the latter.

Therefore believe firmly, that Christ is your Saviour in particular, his righteousness is yours, and eternal life is yours.

Fourthly, Ye must wholly trust in him as your own Saviour, and in his righteousness as made over to you, for his whole salvation to you in particular, upon the ground of God's faithfulness in his word. This is that saving faith, or believing on Christ Jesus, by which a sinner is united unto Christ, and personally entered within the covenant of grace, Acts 16:31. Isa. 26:3, 4. Rom. 1:17. Phil. 3:9. Gal. 2:16. Acts 15:11. 1 Thess. 2:13. 1 Cor. 2:5. This, according to the scripture, is a sinner's receiving and resting upon Christ for salvation, as saving faith is defined in our Catechism. And this is indeed believing and nothing but believing, according to the scriptural use of that word.

1. I say, this is plainly believing in the scriptural use of that word. It is a trusting of or in a person, viz. Jesus Christ, and God in him, the personal object of saving faith, Acts 16:31;—a trusting in a thing, viz. the righteousness of Christ, the ultimate real object of faith, Rom. 1:17 therefore called faith in his blood, Rom. 3:25.—and a trusting in a word, viz. in the record and testimony of God, the word of the promise of the gospel, John 3:16 the proximate or nearest real object of faith. And all this for the great purpose and end of salvation.

2. This is the receiving of Christ alone for salvation, John 1:12. God has appointed Christ Saviour of the world, and your Saviour: you hear that published in the gospel, and you believe accordingly, that he is your Saviour, by his Father's appointment and his own offer: thereupon you trust on him, and on him alone, for salvation, and all you need for salvation. Is not this a receiving of him for your part in the character of a Saviour, wherein his Father sent him to you? a taking of him to yourself as he is offered to you? an using of him as your own Saviour by the divine appointment and offer, as trusting him for the ends for which that offer and appointment was made? Thus your whole case is put in his hand, with heart and good-will; and you truly receive him as appointed for and offered to you.

3. This is resting on Christ alone for salvation, according to the scripture, Isa. 26:3. Neither can one imagine what way a person can rest on a word, or a soul can rest upon a person, but by trusting them, or trusting in them. See 2 Chron. 32:8 and 14:11. So I conclude, that this trust in Christ is that believing on him, by which the soul is united to Christ, and brought into the covenant in a saving manner. And for opening of it, consider the import of this trust.

(1.) It imports not only a willingness, but a sincere and earnest desire to be delivered from sin and wrath; a desire to be sanctified as well as to be justified; to be delivered from the reigning power, pollution, practice, and inbeing of sin, as well as from the guilt of it, Rom. 7:24, 25. For it is trusting on Christ, not for the half of his salvation, viz. salvation from wrath only, as many do who are by no means desirous to part with sin; but for the whole of it, even salvation from sin too, the principal part thereof, Matth. 1:21. Faith is a believing with the heart and affection of the soul. The whole salvation of Christ is the believer's choice: it is the end he desires to compass, and the trust of faith is exerted as the means to compass that end.

(2.) A renouncing of all confidence in all that is not Christ or in Christ, as to that matter particularly. Faith overturns self-confidence, law-confidence, and creature-confidence, to build on a quite new ground, Phil. 3:3 and Jer. 16:19. For it is a trusting in Christ and his righteousness wholly, a trusting or believing with all the heart, Prov. 3:5 and Acts 8:37. The believer is carried off the works of the law, to the blood of Jesus, for his justification; and out of himself too, unto the Spirit of holiness, for sanctification; being persuaded that no doing or suffering of his own can procure to him the pardon of, or atone for the least transgression; and that he is not able truly to mortify one lust, more than to purge away the guilt of one sin, Matth. 5:3 and Isa. 45:24. Thus is the sandy foundation overturned, that the soul may build on Christ the Rock.

(3.) A hearty approbation of the plan of salvation according to the covenant, manifested in the gospel, as suited to the divine

perfections, and to the case of sinners, and their own case in particular, Matth. 11:6 and 1 Cor. 1:23, 24. Without this, no man that knows what God is, what sin is, and what is the worth of his own soul, will ever venture his salvation upon it. One's trusting his salvation to Christ and his righteousness, speaks him to be well pleased therewith, as what one may safely trust to, and that in the sight of a holy just God. And this is that rejoicing in Christ Jesus which makes an illustrious part of the believer's character, Phil. 3:3. It implies,

[1.] An eyeing of Jesus Christ in this matter as a crucified Saviour, having fulfilled all righteousness, according to the stated condition of the covenant, 1 Cor. 2:2. This is the view that faith takes of Christ, while the sinner stands trembling before a holy God, beholding him as lifted up on the cross, as the brazen serpent was on the pole in the wilderness, Isa. 45:22. So faith is called faith in his blood, Rom. 3:25.; his righteousness whereof the shedding of his blood was the completing part, being the only spring of the believer's hope.

[2.] A real persuasion of the sufficiency of Christ's righteousness, to save sinners, and them in particular, from sin and wrath; to answer for them before a holy just God in the eye of his holy law, and procure for them eternal holiness and happiness, Phil. 3:9. There is no saving faith without this; Christ's ability must be believed, and that with application to your own case, Matt. 9:28. And in order to this, faith fixes its view on Christ's righteousness, as the righteousness of God, and so of infinite value and efficacy, Phil. 3:9. 1 John 1:7. The reason why the gospel, and no other doctrine whatever, is the power of God to the salvation of sinners, is because therein is revealed the righteousness of God unto faith, Rom. 1:16, 17.; and that is the only righteousness suited to the divine perfections and the sinner's case.

[3.] An acquiescing in that way of salvation for themselves, Matth. 11:6. The believer sees the sufficiency and safety of it, and he hath a cordial liking of it for the way of his salvation. The mystery of Christ

is to him the power of God, and the wisdom of God, 1 Cor. 1:24. His soul pronounces them safe and blessed that are in it; he desires for his own part to be found in it, Phil. 3:9 and is persuaded he would be well, saved from sin and wrath, if he were in it.

(4.) A betaking one's self unto Christ and his righteousness alone, for salvation from sin and wrath. This is done by this trusting on him and his righteousness wholly, Ruth 2:12. The sinner believing that Christ is his Saviour and that his righteousness, is made over to him by free gift, and withal that this his Saviour, with his righteousness is sufficient to save him from sin and wrath, doth accordingly trust on Christ and his righteousness, for salvation from sin and wrath.

5. Lastly, An affiance, confidence, or trust on Christ and his righteousness, that he will save us from sin and wrath, according to his promise. That faith is an affiance, confidence, or trust, is evident from the whole tenor of the holy scripture. So it is expressly called, Isa. 26:3, 4 and 50:10. Psal. 28:7 and 118:8, 9. Heb. 10:35. And that it is a particular trust, viz. that Christ will save us, is evident from the nature of the thing: for he that trusts in a person for a thing, hath surely a persuasion of the same degree with the trust, that that person will do that thing for him. And hence where the party trusted doth fail, the party trusting is confounded and ashamed, as being disappointed in that which he trusted he would do for him: and since the trust of faith is never disappointed, therefore it is observed, that the believer shall never be ashamed, Rom. 10:11. 1 Pet. 2:6. 2 Tim. 1:12.; which plainly imports the trust of faith in the Lord to be, that he will do for the sinner what he trusts him for, otherwise there would be no place for this shame in any case*.

SECONDLY, I come now to offer some motives to press the exhortation on sinners to enter personally into the covenant.

1. Being out of this covenant, ye are under the broken covenant of works, which makes your state a deplorable one. Some stand off from the gospel covenant, because they do not incline to come under a

covenant with God. But, alas! they do not consider, that there never was nor will be a moment of their life wherein they were or are free from a covenant with God. Ye are born under the covenant of works, and the bond of the covenant is fast wreathed about your necks, as long as ye are out of the covenant of grace: for the two covenants divide the whole world between them, Rom. 6:14.; and there is no getting out of the bond of the first covenant, but by marrying with Christ, and so coming under the bond of the second, Rom. 7:4. And of the broken covenant I may say, that it is strong to command, curse, condemn, and kill those under it, Gal. 3:10 but absolutely barren as to the affording strength for duty, life, or salvation, Rom. 8:3.

2. Ye are all under the covenant of grace externally and by profession, as being baptized in the name of Christ, Gal. 3:27. Why will ye not really be what you have professed to be, members of Christ, believing in him, within the bond of the covenant in a saving manner? Why will ye aggravate your own condemnation, by professing to take hold of the covenant, and yet before the Lord keeping your necks out of that yoke?

3. It is a most honourable covenant. The parties in it confederate are God and his own Son Jesus Christ, and in him the general assembly of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. And seemeth it a small thing to you to be confederated with these?

4. It is a most precious covenant, being a covenant in the blood of the Son of God, 1 Cor. 11:25. It could not be purchased otherwise: heaven and earth, set at odds by the breaking of the first covenant, could not be united again at less expence. Slight it not.

5. It is a most advantageous covenant, and most suitable for you. It is most advantageous for time and for eternity, 1 Tim. 4:8. There is no case you are or can be in, but there is a suitable help for it in the covenant. Yea, it is suited to your inability for the duties of it, not by loosing the bond of the holy commandments, but promising

strength, Ezek. 36:27 and to your fickleness and native instability, John 10:28, 29.

6. It is freely offered to you, and every one of you, Rev. 22:17. Not only is there a warrant for your entering into it, but that warrant is intimated to you, and ye are invited, yea commanded, to come in, Luke 14:23. 1 John 3:23.

7. Jesus Christ himself is appointed Administrator of it to you, Isa. 61:1. Regard it for the sake of the glorious Administrator. He is Heaven's Ambassador to you, and every one of you, in the matter of this covenant: so that if ye refuse it, ye must refuse it at his hand.

8. He administers it to sinners very honourably, taking them to himself, that he may bring them into the covenant, admitting them into it by union with himself.

9. Lastly, Without this covenant there is no salvation, Eph. 2:12. Either ye must be in it, or perish for ever. When the first covenant was broken, there was a second made for the help of sinners; if ye refuse the second, there is not a third. It is the last ship bound for Immanuel's land.

Wherefore let this be a time of your embracing the covenant; and ye that have embraced it before, renew your acceptance of it, that ye may get it sealed by the sacrament.

(1.) Stir up the faith of the law in your own souls, as a preparative to the faith of the gospel.

(2.) Set before you the promises of the gospel, and believe on Jesus Christ, in whom they are all yea and Amen.

(3.) Lastly, In solemn prayer to God, be as express and particular as may be in these things, and so solemnly enter into the covenant in express words before the Lord, Isaiah 44:5.

SECONDLY, and lastly, Let those who have personally entered into the covenant of grace, and are now by faith instated in it, walk worthy of the covenant, walk as becomes the covenant, Phil. 1:27. Look to the covenant which ye are taken into, and let your life and conversation be agreeable thereto.

1. Be holy in the whole of your life, 1 Pet. 1:15. Holiness is the great end of the covenant, next to the glory of God. It is the holy covenant ye are brought into; holiness goes through the whole of it, and the design of it was to make sinners holy. And ye must evidence the reality of your being in it by holiness, holiness of heart and life, Psal. 24:3, 4. An unholy life, and an unsanctified heart in which sin rules and reigns, will be a decisive evidence of estrangedness from the covenant.

2. Turn not back to your former lusts in your state without the covenant, 1 Pet. 1:14. The men of the first covenant live, and cannot but live in their sins, because death domineers under that covenant: and living lusts feed on their souls, as worms do on the dead body. But under the covenant of grace, life reigns; and the soul being thereby restored to life, will cast off these, Col. 3:7, 8. Beware of backsliding and apostasy. It is dangerous to the last degree, Luke 9:62. 'No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' That is the way hypocrites pull off their mask, 1 John 2:19. Remember Lot's wife. But true believers shall be saved from it, Heb. 10:38, 39. 'Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.' Wherefore, 'hearken, O daughter, and consider and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy Father's house,' Psal. 45:10.

3. Mix not again with the world lying in wickedness, but carry yourselves as a separate company, under a new covenant, and a new head, Acts 2:40. 'Save yourselves from this untoward generation.' If ye are really brought into the covenant, ye are come out from among

them: shew that it is so, by your keeping at a distance from them. The grace of the covenant secures it as to all true believers, Psal. 12:7. And,

(1.) Chuse not their company, Psal. 26:4, 5. It is dangerous as a pest-house, 1 Cor. 15:34. Many of the truly godly have been wounded in their soul and conscience deeply thereby; witness Peter in the high priest's hall. Many who have had very fair appearances once a-day, have been mined by ill company, Prov. 13:20. 'A Companion of fools shall be destroyed.' There is no eviting it altogether in this life, 1 Cor. 5:10. But take heed ye have God's call, and then may ye expect the divine protection. Why will ye chuse their company? they are not going your way.

(2.) Conform not to their way, Rom. 12:2. Ye have declared yourselves of a different, yea, a contrary society; why then will ye do as they do? To walk according to the course of this world, speaks one to be a child of wrath, not a child of the covenant. Being come into the covenant, your privilege is beyond others: it is expected then that ye should do more than others, who have not your privilege, Matth. 5:47. The privilege is very singular, ye must then be singular in your walk, in comparison of the world lying in wickedness, though you should be wondered at, Zech. 3:8. 1 Pet. 1:4.

4. Remember that ye are no more your own, but the Lord's by covenant, 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. God has offered his covenant unto you, ye have entered into it: so ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Let this be an answer to the temptations that ye will meet with; say to them, as Jephthah did to his daughter, Judges 11:35. 'I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.' If others say, their tongues and themselves are their own, and they have no Lord over them, ye cannot say it: for if you have come into the covenant, ye have said, as Isa. 44:5. 'I am the Lord's.' And if you are his, you must be for him only, wholly, and for ever.

5. Espouse the interests of the covenant, saying, 'Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,' Matt. 6:10. Have common friends and enemies with the God of the covenant, Psal. 16:2, 3 and 119:21. Your own interest is in it: and if it be really so, the interest of Christ's kingdom in the world will be yours, and ye will fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh, as the adversaries of the covenant. They are very low in the world at this day, and in this island; though the nation is under the bond of solemn covenants to God, that bond is little regarded, backslidings are multiplied, and the generation is dealing treacherously with a witness. If ye have embraced the covenant of grace for your own souls, it will natively produce a well tempered concern for the covenanted reformation of yourselves and the land.

6. Pursue earnestly the ends of the covenant. These are the destruction of sin, and the service of the Lord, Luke 1:74. Christ came 'to destroy the works of the devil;' hold to this end of the covenant in yourselves and others. Study mortification of your own lusts in the first place: labour to break the power of sin in others, according as ye have opportunity, and to weaken Satan's interest in the place wherein you live. Serve the Lord diligently in the duties of inward worship, and in the duties of morality, first and second table duties: and as we have access, stir up one another thereto.

7. Lastly, In all ye do, act as under the influence of this covenant, and not of the covenant of works. Be evangelical in all your duties, and the whole strain of your conversation. The covenant is a covenant of grace: let the grace, mercy, and love of the covenant, be your great motives to obedience, 2 Cor. 5:14. To pretend to embrace the covenant of grace, and in the mean time to serve the Lord as bondmen, just for fear of punishment and hope of reward, is to run back to the old covenant.

More particularly, walk worthy,

1. Of the parties in the covenant, Col. 1:10. 'Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.' The confederates in the covenant of grace, which ye are taken into, are the most glorious and honourable parties that ever entered into a covenant together; even God and his own Son the second Adam, under whom believers come in as members under the head. View the glory and majesty of these parties, the infinite wisdom, love, and grace to poor sinners, wherewith this transaction was managed from eternity; and consider yourselves as taken into the same covenant with them, and ye must see that ye have need to take heed to walk worthy of such confederates. And,

1st, Gratitude obliges to this. Should not the poor sinful creature, considering itself taken into the communion of God and his Son's covenant, look on himself as highly honoured, beyond whatever he could have expected? 1 John 1:3 and ought he not thereupon to be careful to walk worthy of that honourable society? to carry as becomes that honourable character?

2dly, The unsuitable walking of those taken into the covenant reflects dishonour on the glorious parties into whose covenant he is taken, Rom. 2:24. While men give up their names to Christ, and yet walk in the way of sin, they bring up an ill report on the ways of God, and cause the graceless world to blaspheme the glorious name. Then,

(1.) Study to walk so as to 'be followers of God,' Eph. 5:1. Labour to imitate him in all his imitable perfections. He is your God, and ye are his people, if ye are really within the covenant; and surely a people will strive to conform to the nature and will of their God. Be compassionate and merciful to those in misery, ready to do good to all as ye have access, yea even to your very enemies: so shall ye prove yourselves children of the God of the covenant, Matt. 5:44, 45.

(2.) Conform yourselves to the example of the Head of the covenant. They to whom Christ's death brings salvation, will follow the example he left us in his life, 1 John 2:6. 'He hath left us an example that we should follow his steps.' He has writ a fair copy of a life for

our imitation, John 13:15 and will have his people learn of him, Mat. 11:29. We are apt to follow examples in things suited to our nature. Christ's example is every whit perfect, and no other is so: and what example should have more influence on the members than that of the Head?

(3.) Labour to maintain actual communion and fellowship with God in Christ, Cant. 3:5. The covenant puts men in a state of communion with God, 1 John 1:3. That is a great privilege, but oftentimes much misimproved by God's own children, who fall secure and indisposed for converse with God, Cant. 5:3.; grieve the Spirit, and so provoke him to depart; regard some iniquity in their heart, and so mar the course of influences, and their own access to God.

(4.) Be heavenly in your frame and walk, Phil. 3:20. God is in heaven, your head Christ is in heaven, and your treasure is there: why should not your heart be there too? The due frame of a communicant, that has taken hold of the covenant is set down, Cant. 3:6. 'Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, and all powders of the merchant!' And it is sad to see those who are in the covenant grovelling among the dust of this earth, like those that are without; to see the heavenly seed like the seed of the serpent. Set your affections then on things above, and not on things on the earth.

Lastly, Let it be your greatest care to please God, to give content to the heart of Christ, Col. 1:10. It should be your great question, 'What shall I render to the Lord?' Let the love of the Father and the Son influence you to this manner of walking. And let God's displeasure be to you the most horrible thing, that you would rather venture on the displeasure of the whole world than his.

2. Walk answerable to the parts of the covenant. And,

1st, To the condition of the covenant performed by Jesus Christ, viz. his fulfilling all righteousness, in his being born holy, living holy,

satisfying justice by his death and sufferings, to procure you the promises of the covenant. And,

(1.) Let the stress of your acceptance with God all along lie upon that, and that only, Phil. 3:3. Whatever you look to obtain from God, whether for time or eternity, let all your confidence for it be laid on that ground only. Whatever you go to seek from God, whatever sacrifice you offer to God, or do for him, let it be laid on that altar, as ever ye would have it accepted, Col. 3:17. It is not only when our duties are ill performed, but when they are best done, that we must place our confidence here: for our best duties will otherwise be unacceptable.

(2.) Walk humbly as debtors to free grace, 1 Tim. 1:15. Look to the rock whence ye are hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye were dug. See Ezek. 16. Remember, whatever be your attainments, gifts, or graces, ye are decked with borrowed feathers: be not proud of them. The condition on which any promise is performed to you, you could never perform: the price of the least mercy you could not pay. Only Jesus Christ has set up the poor bankrupt again.

(3.) Walk in love, Eph. 5:2. 'Walk in love' to God in Jesus Christ. This is the fulfilling of the law: and there is the greatest reason for it, both for what he is in himself, and what he is to us. One flame is fit to kindle another. Such love was never seen among creatures, as God has shewn to man; and shall it not inflame our hearts? Walk in love to one another, and in love to mankind.

(4.) Walk thankfully. The whole life of a Christian should be a life of thankfulness, 1 Pet. 2:9. Eternal life is won by Christ's fulfilling the condition of the covenant; it is received in the first-fruits of it, and possessed in Christ the head, by faith. What then remains but to express our thankfulness in a well-ordered life, for the unspeakable free gift?

2dly, To the promises of the covenant; they are 'great and precious,' 2 Pet. 1:4. Happy are they that have them for their security, and all that are within the covenant have them so.

(1.) Live upon them, let your souls feed on them, and account them the great stock ye have to trust to, Psal. 119:162. This must be done by believing them, and that with application. However little you have in hand, ye have a full covenant of promises, which are Heaven's bills and bonds, that make a good stock. And so reckon, that though ye have nothing, yet ye possess all things, viz. in Christ; ye have them in the promise, Col. 2:10. 'Ye are complete in him.

(2.) Resolutely set about every duty in the faith of the promise. It will be too hardy to venture on the least without it: and the hardest and most difficult may be ventured on with it, 2 Tim. 2:1. God calls his people to no duty, but what the covenant has furniture for in the promise. And in the faith of it the weak is made strong, and without it the proud helpers stoop.

(3.) Resist temptations in the faith of the promise. The least of them is able to lay us by, if the Lord do not stand by us: the shock of the most violent of them may be endured, and one come off safe, if encountered in the faith of the promise, Eph. 6:16. It is the promise in the hand of faith that keeps the tempted safe, and makes his resistance successful.

(4.) Bear crosses, trials, and afflictions in the faith of the promise, Psal. 27:13. There is no getting forward to heaven, but by the way of the cross: these deep waters must needs be swimmied through; but the faith of the promise will bear up the head, and keep from sinking. It will bring in comfort from the covenant, when other streams are dried.

Lastly, Die in the faith of the promise, Heb. 11:13. That is the last battle to be fought: and then the time draws near of the full

accomplishment of the promise to the Lord's people; and that is a special season of exercising faith on the promises.

3dly, and lastly, Walk suitably to the administration of the covenant, which is a most happy one, as being lodged by the Father in Christ's hand. And,

(1.) Go to Christ for all you need. To whom should we go but to him, since he is Administrator of the covenant, and all is in his hand? Whether you need light, life, strength, or whatsoever is necessary for time or eternity, go to him for it.

(2.) Be obedient to his laws, the laws of the covenant. If he administers the covenant effectually to your salvation, he is your King and Lord, and ye must receive the law at his mouth, Psal. 119:6.

(3.) Submit to the discipline of the covenant. If ye meet with crosses, afflictions, and trials, take them kindly, blessing God that they are not curses, effects of revenging wrath.

(4.) Believe that all ye meet with is well ordered. It is so, for it is the product of the wisdom of the great Administrator of the covenant.

(5.) Lastly, Do your endeavour amongst all, as ye have access, to advance the covenant; that those who are without, may be brought in; and that those who are within, may be edified. For Christ is to administer the covenant to whosoever of mankind sinners will receive it.

Thus, by the mercy of God, I have treated fully of the covenant of grace, and laid before you the principal things relating to it; having formerly treated of the covenant of works. In the first covenant, see your misery; in this see the remedy, and apply it by believing. You have here had the mystery of salvation by Christ opened up at large. May the Lord himself open your understandings to understand it, and your hearts to receive it; and save you from slighting it: for so it will be a witness against you.

OF CHRIST THE ONLY REDEEMER OF GOD'S ELECT

GAL. 4:4, 5.—When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

WE are now to speak of the Mediator of the new covenant, Jesus Christ, and to consider our Redeemer in his person, offices, and states. As to the first of these, it is plainly taught in the text.

In the former chapter, and in the first part of this, the apostle insists upon the church's freedom from the Mosaic dispensation, which was a very toilsome and burdensome service. This he illustrates by the similitude of a pupil and his tutors, ver. 1, 2 and then he applies it in the following verse, (1.) To the church's bondage under the Old Testament dispensation, when she was in her infant state, kept in subjection under that rigid and strict administration, which served for a rudiment, whereby she was instructed for the most part by resemblances taken from earthly things. (2.) To her freedom from that bondage under the New Testament, in the words of our text. Where we have,

1. The season in which this freedom or redemption was brought about: When the fulness of the time was come, says the apostle. God wrought this deliverance for his people in the time that he had pitched and resolved upon, as the most fit and proper time for it.

2. We have the means of this deliverance, namely Christ's incarnation, and manifestation in the flesh; God sent forth his own Son, made of a woman. He sent his own Son into the world, the second person of the glorious and adorable Trinity, who was

incarnate in a miraculous way, being conceived in the womb of a virgin, without the company of a man.

3. We have the condition in which Christ came; made under the law. Being made flesh, he subjected himself both to the precepts and to the curse of the law. He fulfilled all righteousness, and gave complete satisfaction to all the demands of the law in the holiness and integrity of his life, and he bore the punishment threatened for sin, in the bloody and cruel sufferings which he endured in his death.

4. The freedom and deliverance itself: God sent forth his Son, thus qualified, to redeem them that were under the law; that is, to free all the elect from the curse and punishment that was due to them for the transgression of it. Hence it is said, Gal. 3:13. 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' He freed the whole church from that rigour and servitude under which she was as to her outward state. And hereby also was procured to believers the adoption of sons: by which we are to understand, not only the benefit of adoption itself, which was the privilege of believers under the Old Testament as well as now under the New, but also and chiefly a clearer manifestation of that privilege, and a more free use and fruition of it. They have now a more full and plentiful measure of the Spirit than believers had under the Old Testament dispensation.

The doctrine arising from the text is,

DOCT. 'The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person, for ever.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew that the only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Illustrate this grand truth, that Jesus Christ, being the eternal Son of God, became man.

III. Prove that Christ is God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person.

IV. Deduce some inferences.

I. I am to shew, that the only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, Let us consider the titles and names of our Redeemer.

1. He is called Lord, because of his absolute and universal sovereignty and dominion over all the creatures. 'He is Lord of all,' says the apostle, Acts 10:36. His dominion extendeth to all things in heaven, earth, and hell; 'He hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all,' Psal. 103:19. He is the sole monarch of the whole world, and all the princes and potentates in the earth are but his deputies and vicegerents. He is 'the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords,' as the apostle justly styles him, 1 Tim. 6:15. He hath a natural and essential right and authority over all things as he is God, equal with the Father; and he hath a delegated authority as Mediator. The government belongs to him originally as God, and derivatively as God-man, Mediator. He holds his crown by immediate tenure from Heaven. He is declared to be King by the decree and appointment of the Father, Psal. 2:6. God hath invested him with a royal authority over all the creatures. It is said, that 'he hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be the Head over all things to the church,' Eph. 1:22. He rules from sea to sea, and to the ends of the earth, yea, to the utmost bounds of God's creation. All the creatures are subject to his dominion, rational and irrational, animate and inanimate, angels, devils, men, seas, storms and tempests, all obey him. But in a special manner he is King in Zion; he reigns and rules in the church, and sways his royal sceptre there. He is Lord of all the creatures by creation, of the elect

by redemption, and of believers by their voluntary resignation and surrender of themselves unto him.

2. He is called Jesus, because he is the Saviour of the elect world, and delivers them from sin and wrath. This was declared by an angel to the virgin Mary before his conception in her womb, Luke 1:31. 'Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name Jesus.' This was revealed to Joseph in a dream, Matth. 1:21. The name Jesus is there interpreted to signify a Saviour; and the angel of the Lord, a messenger sent from God, is the expositor. Christ was sent by his Father to be the Saviour of the elect. Now, a Saviour in the proper signification of the word, is one that delivereth from evil. Accordingly Christ not only saves his people from the worst of evils, but bestows upon them the greatest of good. He delivers them from the guilt, stain, and dominion of sin, the wrath of God, the malediction and accusations of the law, and eternal death and misery; and he gives them grace and righteousness, eternal life and glory. He is a Saviour to protect and defend, and a Saviour to bless and save them, Psal. 84:11. He is the only Saviour of lost sinners, and there is no salvation but through him, Acts 4:12.

3. He is called Christ, because he was anointed unto his office by the Father. This title very fitly followeth the former. Jesus implies his office in general, and Christ his designation or ordination to his office. He is an anointed Saviour. This is frequently expressed in the scripture, Psal. 45:7. 'God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.' Isa. 61:1. 'The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek,' &c. Acts 10:38. 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power.' From all which places we see, that Christ's anointing is not to be understood literally, but by a trope and figure, the sign being put for the thing signified. Several persons were anointed of old, as wrestlers among the Gentiles; which may be applied to Christ, who was to conflict and wrestle with all the powers of hell and the world, with all the oppositions and difficulties that were in the way of man's salvation. But this term of anointing is rather taken from the customs of the

ceremonial law. There were three sorts of persons commonly anointed among the Jews; as kings. Thus Saul, David, Solomon, &c. Were anointed with material oil; and hence were called the Lord's anointed.—Priests. All the priests that ministered in the tabernacle or temple were anointed, and chiefly the high priest, who was a special figure and type of Christ.—The prophets. Hence God gave Elijah a commission to go and anoint Elisha to be prophet in his room, 1 Kings 19:16. As oil strengthened and supplied the joints, and made them agile and fit for exercise, so it denoted a designation and fitness in a person for the function to which he was appointed. Thus Christ, because he was not to be a typical Prophet, Priest, or King, was not typically, but spiritually anointed; not with a sacramental, but real unction; not of men, but immediately of God. There are two things implied in the anointing of Christ.

(1.) It implies the Father's fitting and furnishing him with all things necessary, that he might be a complete Redeemer to his people. As God gave him a body and human nature, that he might be capable to suffer; so he filled and replenished his soul with all the gifts and graces of his Spirit. Hence it was promised of old concerning him, 'that the Spirit of the Lord should rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.' The Psalmist tells us, that he was 'fairer than the sons of men, and grace was poured into his lips.' He, 'received not the Spirit by measure,' but was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. All this was the Father's work, and therefore he saith, 'Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth,' Isa. 42:1.

(2.) It implies the Father's giving him a commission to redeem poor sinner's from hell and wrath. He was invested with a fulness of authority and power for this very end. And therefore in scripture he is said to be sealed, as having his commission under the great seal of Heaven. Hence he says, Isa. 61:1. 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me,' &c. Every thing that Christ did in bringing about the redemption of an elect world, was given

him in commission. His coming to the world in the fulness of time was by the order and appointment of the Father. So he shews, John 8:42. 'I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.' The business on which he came was determined by Heaven. So in the text it is said, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, to redeem them that were under the law, &c. His death and bloody sufferings, which were the price of man's redemption, and the ransom of their souls, were enjoined by the Father. Hence says he, John 10:18. 'This commandment, (viz. relating to laying down his life,) have I received of my Father.'

Secondly, We may consider his office and work in the general. He is called the Mediator, which properly signifies a midsman, that travels betwixt two persons who are at variance to reconcile them. Now, Christ is Mediator, (1.) In respect of his person, being a middle person betwixt God and man, participating of both natures. (2.) In respect of his office; being a middle person dealing betwixt God and man, in the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King. Which will be more particularly illustrated in the sequel.

He is the Redeemer. To redeem is to buy a thing again, as the nearest a-kin was to buy again the mortgaged land, and so to rescue and deliver from poverty, and misery, and bondage. This is the import of the word in the original. The elect are the redeemed: it is all they, and they only, as was proved before.

This redemption imports, (1.) That the elect were first the Lord's by creation, his property, and bound to serve and obey him. (2.) That they were sold, and in a state of bondage, in their natural condition, slaves to sin and Satan, the captives of the mighty; prisoners to the law, and obnoxious to the justice of God. (3.) That they are recovered or redeemed from this state of vassalage, captivity and slavery, by the Lord Jesus Christ. And they are redeemed by him two ways.

1. By price or purchase, laying down his life a ransom for them. He came to 'give his life a ransom for many,' Matth. 20:28; that is to die

in the stead of his people. His life intervened as a price to obtain their redemption. Hence is that note in the song of the redeemed, Rev. 5:9. 'Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.' They were fallen under the dominion of Satan, and liable to eternal death, and could not obtain their liberty by escape, or by mere force and power; for they were arrested and detained prisoners by order of divine justice: so that till God the Supreme Judge was satisfied, there could be no discharge. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ hath procured their deliverance by his death and bloody sufferings. Hence the apostle says, Col. 1:14. 'We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.' No less than the precious blood of Christ, who was God and man in one person, could be a sufficient price for the redemption of poor captive sinners.

2. By power and conquest. By his death on the cross he spoiled principalities and powers. And he manifested this power in his ascension; for when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive. And in the day of power he redeems his people from the slavery of sin and Satan, the curse of the law, from the sting of death, and the wrath of God; and puts them in possession of a full salvation.

The former, viz. redeeming by price or purchase, Christ doth as a Priest, the latter as a Prophet and King. Both were absolutely necessary: for without a ransom justice would not quit us nor let us go: and without overcoming or conquering power, the elect, while slaves to sin and Satan, will not quit their master, nor accept of liberty.

This redemption of elect souls was agreed upon by the Father and the Son in the covenant of grace from eternity. It was first proclaimed to fallen man in the first promise, Gen. 3:15 that 'the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent;' it was shadowed forth under the Old Testament by sacrifices, burnt-offerings, &c; the price was actually paid on the cross, when he 'made peace through the blood thereof,' Col. 1:20; and the powerful delivery is made in the conversion of the elect, the day of God's power, when

the captives are delivered, their chains knocked off, and they are rescued from the miserable bondage in which they lay. And although Christ's blood was not actually shed under the Old Testament, yet the elect, during that dispensation, were delivered by the same redemption which we are now partakers of, Heb. 11:39, 40.

Thirdly, That Jesus Christ, and he only, is the Redeemer promised as the true Messiah, is evident, in that all the things that are the marks and characters of the Redeemer agree to him, and him only. He was to be of the tribe of Judah, and of the house of David, to be born of a virgin, to be Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature and on our side, to be born in Bethlehem, to make a mean appearance, to be despised and rejected of men, to be crucified on an accursed tree, to be buried in a grave, to rise again the third day, to ascend into heaven, and sit at the right hand of God, till his enemies be made his footstool. It is evident from comparing the Old Testament with the New, that all these characters agree to Jesus Christ, and him only; and none other but one who possessed these characters could be our Redeemer.

II. Our next business is to illustrate this grand truth, That Jesus Christ, being the eternal Son of God, became man.

First, Christ is the eternal Son of God. And in this he differs from all God's other sons.

1. From angels, who are called 'the sons of God,' Job 38:7. They were filled with joy, and shouted with a triumphant voice, when they saw the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, appearing so illustriously in the work of creation, when God laid the foundations of the earth. Now, the angels are called the sons of God.

(1.) Because they had their whole being from him. They are his sons by creation; in which sense also Adam is called 'the son of God,' Luke 3:38.

(2.) Because of their great and mighty power. Hence they are styled, principality, and power, and might, and dominion' Eph. 1:21. They are like him in power and dignity.

(3.) Because they serve him as sons, cheerfully, willingly, and readily. They do not obey as slaves, or servants, or the best of servants; but they obey as children. They go his errands with a filial cheerfulness and delight. 'A son honoureth his father,' saith the Lord. It should be the temper and disposition of every son to do so. This is not only the disposition of angels, but they have actually done it, and may say unto God, as the elder brother is brought in saying in the parable, Luke 15. 'Lo these many years have we been with thee,' even ever since the creation of the world, 'and have never transgressed nor neglected thy commandments at any time.'

(4.) Because of the great privileges which God bestows upon them. He uses them as his sons and children. They are his courtiers, and near to his person, and always surround his throne, and behold his face. They are continually under the meridian beams of his ravishing and life-giving countenance.

(5.) Because of their likeness to God in essence. He is a spirit, an incorporeal and immaterial being, and angels are spiritual and incorporeal substances. Though the difference between God and them be as great as can be conceived, yea truly inconceivable; God being the creating spirit, and they created spirits; God being an infinite spirit, and they but finite ones; yet the angels bear a resemblance to God in their essence, as well as in their qualifications, and may upon that account also be called the sons of God: but they are only the sons of God by creation: Whereas Christ is his Son by an eternal and ineffable generation. Christ alone is the Son of God by nature.

2. Believers are called the sons of God, John 1:12. And they are so by adoption and regeneration, 2 Cor. 6:17, 18. Believers differ from the angels in this; for they do not stand in need of regeneration, or any

gracious change to be wrought in them: for as they were created holy and pure beings, so they have continued in that integrity and holiness with which they were made, and have not lost it: and therefore Christ is no Redeemer to them.

3. Christ differs both from angels and saints in this, that he is the eternal and only-begotten Son of God, as the scripture verifies, Matth. 3:17 and 17:5.

Now, that the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, is the eternal Son of God, or was begotten of the Father from all eternity, is clear from the holy scriptures; for to divine revelation alone are we indebted for the knowledge of this important truth. To this end let us consider, Psal. 2:7. 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.' This passage is applied to Christ in several places of the New Testament. The word, 'this day,' doth not denote a certain time when this generation began, but is used to express the eternity thereof. And that which is eternal is expressed by that term, to shew and hold forth unto us, that all things past and to come are present with God in regard of his eternity. There is no succession in eternity, no yesterday nor tomorrow; but it is all as one continued day or moment, without any succession or change. Therefore the generation of the Son being eternal, it is rightly designed by this term. And although in this and the following verses we have a declaration of God's decree and appointment concerning the advancement of Christ to his Mediatorial throne and kingdom; yet in this verse, the generation of the Son is not mentioned as a part of that decree, but only as the ground and foundation thereof. For unless Christ had been the Son of God by eternal generation, he could not have been our Mediator and Redeemer; nor could he have obtained a throne and kingdom as such. And this eternal generation of the Son was solemnly declared by his resurrection from the dead. This is the apostle's scope when he says, 'We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,'

Acts 13:32, 33. He might well say, this scripture, Psal. 2:7 was fulfilled by raising Christ from the dead, because by his resurrection the truth of it was openly proclaimed and declared to the world, as the same apostle tells us, Rom. 1:4.

We may argue for this likewise from Micah 5:2. 'But 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: whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.' This text is applied to Christ, Matth. 2:6; and that it must be understood of him, and of no other, is plain, because he is promised as the King and Ruler of his church: and in the following verses there is ascribed unto him the calling of the Gentiles, invincible power and majesty in his providential dispensations, doctrine, and miracles, and an universal kingdom and government over Jews and Gentiles through the earth. Now, there is a twofold going forth here attributed to him. The first is external and visible, namely, his going forth from the city of Bethlehem, by being born of a virgin. This is a temporal generation, and is therefore spoken of as a thing to come, 'He shall come forth unto me.' But lest any should look on him as a mere man, and as one that began to be at his incarnation, therefore a second going forth is mentioned, which is internal and eternal: 'Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting,' or 'from the days of eternity,' as it is in the original text. These words design his eternal generation, as being begotten of the Father from all eternity; for he could not go forth from the Father from everlasting but by generation.

This truth is further clear from Christ's being called the Son of God. He is often so designed in scripture. The Father did solemnly proclaim him to be so by an audible voice from heaven, both at his baptism and his transfiguration. He is the Son of God in a most proper and singular manner, viz. by the Father's communicating the divine essence to him by eternal generation. This name given to Christ is more excellent than any name given to the angels, though they are also called the sons of God, Heb. 1:4, 5. 'For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I

begotten thee?' He is so the Son of God, as on that account he is equal with the Father. Therefore, when he told the Jews, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,' it is said, 'The Jews sought the more to kill him, because he said that God was his Father, making himself equal with God,' John 5:17, 18. The Jews concluded from what he had said, that he made himself equal with God. And their conclusion was very just: for he did not find fault with them for so doing, nor charge them with reproaching him; nor doth he clear any mistake about it, as certainly he would have done, if they had been in any. Therefore what they conclude from his discourse is plainly asserted by the apostle, Phil. 2:6 in these words, 'He thought it not robbery to be equal with God.' So that Christ's scope and design, John 5 is plainly to shew, that he was the Son of God in such a manner, that he was the same in substance with the Father, and equal with him in dignity and glory.

And as to the nature of this generation, our blessed Lord himself doth in some measure explain it to us, so far as we are capable to apprehend this great mystery, when he tells as, John. 5:26. 'As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.' So that to beget the Son, is to give to the Son to have life in himself, as the Father hath life in himself; which doth necessarily import a communication of the same individual essence. For to have life in himself was an essential attribute of God; i. e. to have life independently, of and from himself; and to be the source and fountain of life to all the creatures, is a perfection proper to God, inseparable from his nature, yea, the very same with his essence. And therefore the Father cannot give it, unless he give the essence itself: and he cannot give the essence by way of alienation, for then he himself would cease to be God; nor by way of participation, seeing the divine nature is one, and cannot be divided. Therefore it must be by way of communication. So that the generation of the Son is that eternal action of the Father, whereby he did communicate to the Son the same individual essence which he himself hath, that the Son might have it equal with himself. But as to the manner of this generation, or communication of the divine essence of the Son, it is

altogether ineffable and inconceivable to us. It is simply impossible for poor weak worms, such as we are, to understand or explain wherein it consists. It is not natural, but supernatural, and wholly divine, and therefore incomprehensible by us. Yea, it is incomprehensible even by the angels themselves, who far exceed men in intellectual abilities. We may justly hereunto apply what we have, Isa. 53:8. 'Who shall declare his generation?' This whole mystery is incomprehensible by us: we ought humbly and reverently to adore what we cannot comprehend. There is a communication of the whole essence or Godhead from the Father to the Son, in receiving whereof the Son doth no more lessen or diminish the majesty or Godhead of the Father, than the light of one candle doth the light of another from which it is taken. Whereupon the council of Nice said well, that Christ is God of God, light of light, very God of very God, not proceeding but begotten. Hence it is clear, that he had a being before he was born of a virgin, yea from eternity; and that he is the true God, and the most high God, equal with the Father, Phil. 2:6. John 1:1.; for no being can be eternal but God.

Secondly, The Son of God became man. It was not the Father, nor the Holy Ghost, that was incarnate, but the Son, John 1:14. 'The word was made flesh.' He was 'God manifested in the flesh,' 1 Tim. 3:16. But though he was from eternity God, yet the world had lasted well nigh four thousand years ere he became man.

Thirdly, Why did it behove Christ, in order to be our Redeemer, to be God and man? he could not be our Redeemer, if he had not been both.

1. He behoved to be God, (1.) That he might be able to bear the weight of the infinite wrath of God due to the elect's sins, and come out from under that heavy load, Acts 2:24. (2.) That his temporary sufferings might be of infinite value, and afford full satisfaction to the law and justice of God, Heb. 9:14. In these respects none other but one who was God could redeem us.

2. He behoved to be man, (1.) That he might be capable to suffer death, Heb. 2:14. (2.) That the same nature which sinned might suffer, Ezek. 18:4. 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' (3.) That he might be a merciful High Priest, Heb. 2:16, 17 and that we might have comfort and boldness of access to the throne of grace having an High Priest of our own nature as our Intercessor there.

III. I come now to prove, that Christ is God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person. Christ is God and man by a personal union of two natures. The two natures in Christ remain distinct: the Godhead was not changed into the manhood, nor the manhood into the Godhead: for the scripture speaks of these as distinct, Rom. 1:3, 1 Pet. 3:18, Heb. 9:14,; and of two wills in Christ, a human and a divine, Luke 22:42. These natures remain still with their distinct properties, that as the divine nature is not made finite, so neither is the human nature adorned with the divine attributes. It is not omnipotent, 2 Cor. 13:4.; nor omnipresent, John 11:15; nor omniscient, Mark 13:22 &c. Yet are they not divided; nor is Christ two persons, but one; even as our soul and body though distinct things, make but one person. This is clear from the text, which shews that the Son of God was made of a woman; which seeing it cannot be understood of his divine nature, but of the human, it is plain that both natures make but one person. And elsewhere he is described as one person consisting of two natures, Rom. 1:3 and 9:5. And it was necessary that the natures should be distinct; because otherwise, either the Divinity would have advanced his humanity above the capacity of suffering, or his humanity depressed his Divinity below the capacity of meriting. And it was necessary that he should be one person; because otherwise his blood had not been the blood of God, Acts 20:28 nor of the Son of God, 1 John 1:7 and so not of infinite value. Wherefore Christ took on him the human nature, but not a human person.

Lastly, Christ was, and so will continue God and man for ever. This union never was dissolved. He died in our flesh to save us; he rose again in it, and ascended to heaven in it, and will continue ever in it,

Heb. 7:24. It will be a part of the happiness of the saints after the resurrection, that they shall feed their eyes for ever in beholding the glorified body of the blessed Redeemer.

I shall finish this subject with a few inferences.

1. The redemption of the soul is precious. The salvation of sinners was a work greater than the making of the world. The powerful word commanded, and the universe sprung up into being; but much more was to be done ere a sinner could be saved from wrath. The eternal Son of God must become man, lay aside the robes of his glory, and clothe himself with the infirmities of human nature, and in that nature purchase redemption by the price of his matchless blood for poor miserable prisoners, and deliver them from the pit of hell and wrath by an exertion of his almighty power.

2. See here the wonderful love and grace of God in sending his own Son to be the Redeemer of sinful men. It was he that contrived this method of redemption, in the adorable depths of his infinite wisdom. He pitched upon his own Son as the only fit person to set miserable captives free. He fitted and furnished him for this work, and sent him to the world with full power and authority to go about it. It was God the Father that was gracious to sinners, saying, 'Deliver them from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom.' What an illustrious display of the astonishing love and grace of God is it, that he should have remembered them in their low estate, and laid help on one that is mighty to save them. To enlarge upon this a little further, I offer a twofold consideration.

(1.) Who he was that was sent and came into the world to redeem the elect; not an angel or archangel, nor any of the glorious seraphims that stand about God's throne. Indeed, if it had been so, divine love, even in this, had infinitely advanced itself, that God should be pleased to spare one of his own retinue from attending on him, and give such a glorious servant as an angel is, for the redemption of such a rebellious and miserable worm as man. But O! how may it raise

and heighten our admiration, when we consider that it was not an angel, if he had been capable for the mighty task, but the Lord of angels, not a servant but a Son, that the Father plucked from his own bosom, and sent upon this business! He spoke to him as it were to this purpose. 'Go haste thee down to the earth: for there are thousands of miserable creatures sinning themselves down to hell, and must for ever fall under the strokes of my dreadful and incensed justice; step thou in between them and it, and receive the blows thyself; die thou under the hand of vindictive justice; that they may be saved and live.' When God tried Abraham's obedience, he aggravates his command by many piercing words, which must needs tenderly touch, and greatly affect, the heart of a compassionate father, Gen. 22:2. 'Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering,' &c. It greatly heightened Abraham's obedience, that notwithstanding of all aggravations, yet he was willing to sacrifice his beloved Son upon God's command. Just so here God heightens and sets forth his matchless love towards us. He takes his own Son, his only Son, the Son of his eternal delight and love, and cheerfully offers him up as a sacrifice for the sins of men. This is the greatest instance of the love of God that ever was given.

(2.) God's love is exalted here, in that he freely sent his only begotten Son to be the Redeemer of an elect world. He was God's free gift, or else he could never have been obtained. If devils and men had joined their forces, and combined all their strength and power, and thus made an assault upon heaven, yet they could never have plucked the Son of God's love from his eternal embraces. God gave Christ freely to redeem a sinful world, not only without, but against all merit and desert in them, nay, unasked and unsolicited to do so. From all eternity. God foresaw that they would despise and reject his Son, so that they would shed his precious blood, and then trample it under their feet, as an unholy thing; yet such was the height of his astonishing love, that he bestowed him freely upon them.

(3.) See the matchless love of the Son of God to poor sinners. It was love that induced him to substitute himself in their room, and to undertake to pay their ransom. He 'loved me (says Paul), and gave himself for me,' Gal. 2:20. His love in this, as the apostle speaks passeth knowledge. How cheerfully did he engage to make his soul an offering for sin, that thereby he might pay their ransom! Though he knew the difficulty of the work, and the greatness of that wrath which he was to bear, yet he cheerfully complied with the first motion of it that was made unto him by the Father. He knew very well, what a vast burden of sin was to be laid upon him, and the dreadfulness of that wrath he was to undergo; yet he did not shrink from the imputation of the one, nor from the suffering of the other. He was willing to be reproached, that we might be glorified; to become poor, that we might be made rich; to be accused and condemned, that we might be justified; to enter into prison, that we might go free; and to die a cursed ignominious death, that we might live, and reign in honour for ever. O how great was his love to poor sinful men!

4. All who live and die out of Christ must perish; for there is no other Mediator between God and men but the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself a ransom for sinners, and invites sinners to come and take the benefit thereof. Now, if men will not come unto him, that they may have life, their blood must be on their own heads. Christ is the only ordinance of God for life and salvation, and if men will slight and despise this ordinance, they must perish in their sins; for there is no other way of being saved but by him. If sinners will not enter by this door in time, the door of heaven will be shut against them for ever.

5. How highly is our nature exalted and dignified in the person of the Lord Jesus! He took not on him the nature of angels, a nature far superior to the human, but the seed of Abraham, and united it to his divine person. In that nature he performed his whole Mediatory undertaking, and wears it in his exalted state. It is corrupt in the multitude of those that partake of it, yet it is pure and spotless in

Christ the Redeemer. Man's nature became so depraved and abominable by Adam's transgression, that it could never again appear before God; but in Christ it is so perfectly pure, that it was capable of an immediate union with the Godhead in his person. Though it be low and mean in itself, yet it is highly honoured and exalted in its union with the Son of God; and shall be the object of the delightful sight and admiration of the redeemed from among men through eternal ages.

6. It is impious and absurd to ascribe any part of man's redemption to any other. In the close of his sufferings on the cross, he cried with a loud voice, 'It is finished,' and gave up the ghost; intimating, that he had then perfected and completely finished the great work of redemption committed to and undertaken by him. It is therefore dishonourable to Christ, and dangerous for men, to join any thing of their own to his righteousness, in point of justification before God. The blessed Redeemer will never endure it. It reflects upon his Mediatory undertaking. If he be the only Redeemer of God's elect, then certainly there can be no other. If he hath finished that work, then there is no need of our additions. And if that work be not finished by him, how can it be finished by men? It is simply impossible for any creature to finish that which Christ himself could not. But men would fain be sharing with him in this honour, which he will never endure. He is the only Saviour of sinners; and he will never divide the glory of it with us. Men would fain have something of their own to atone offended justice. There is a legal strain, a strong bias towards the first covenant, running in the hearts of all men by nature. We would do something for ourselves, and are unwilling to be obliged to another for our deliverance from that wretched condition that sin hath brought us into. 'What good thing shall I do (said the young man in the gospel) that I may have eternal life.' But all our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags. Though your heads were waters, and your eyes a fountain of tears, and you should weep day and night continually; nay, though you should weep tears of blood, all would be in vain; for it could not cleanse you from the guilt and pollution of the least sin. To depend upon anything that ever he

did, or can possibly do, is but like the setting up of a paper-wall to keep off a devouring fire: for it cannot screen you from the consuming flames of God's wrath and fiery indignation. 'By the works of the law (says the apostle), no flesh can be justified.'

7. Lastly, If ye would be delivered from the state of sin and misery into which ye are brought by your fall in the first Adam, come unto and accept of the Lord Jesus Christ as your Redeemer. God has laid help for you upon this mighty One, who is both able and willing to save all that come unto God by him. Close with him by faith, and you shall be redeemed from the guilt of sin, have its power subdued in you, and at last be delivered from the inbeing of it, and from all the penal consequences and effects thereof. He is now saying, Behold me, behold me; O do not refuse him, lest ye perish for ever.

OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION

LUKE 1:35.—The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

THESE words are the angel's answer to Mary, who, understanding the angel as speaking of a thing presently to be done before Joseph and she should come together, desires to know how she, being a virgin, should conceive. Here,

1. The angel tells her how she should 'conceive and bring forth a Son,' namely by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the power of the Highest, the Spirit of God being the true God, and so the Highest. The author of this conception is the Holy Ghost, not to exclude the Father and the Son, who also concurred to this work, as to all works without God himself; and besides the power of all the three persons

is one. But it is appropriated to the Spirit, as creation to the Father, and redemption to the Son, so the consummation of all things to the Spirit. The way of the Spirit's powerful working to this miraculous conception, is denoted by two words. One is, that the Holy Ghost should come upon her, not in an ordinary way, as in the conception of all men, Job 10:8. 'Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about;' but in an extraordinary way, as on the prophets, and those that were raised to some extraordinary work. The other is, that the power of the Highest, which is infinite power, should overshadow her, to wit, make her, though a virgin, to conceive by virtue of the efficacy of infinite power, by which the world was created, when the same Spirit moved on the waters, cherished them, and framed the world. I shall say no more of this, seeing the Holy Spirit did overshadow or cast a cloud over the virgin in this operation, that men might not pry curiously into this mystery.

2. He shews what should follow on this miraculous conception, namely, that the fruit of her womb, the child she should bear, should be called the Son of God. Where the angel teaches two things. (1.) The immaculate sinless conception of the child Jesus, that holy thing, a holy thing though proceeding from a sinful creature, not tainted with sin, as all other children are. Job asks, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' and answers, 'Not one.' But though this be impossible with men, yet it is possible with God, whose infinite power can do every thing. The powerful operation of the divine Spirit sanctified that part of the virgin's body of which the human nature of Christ was formed, so that by that influence it was separated from all impurity and defilement. So that, though it proceeded from a creature infected with original sin, there was no sin or taint of impurity in it. This was a glorious instance of the power of the Highest. (2.) He tells the virgin, that therefore, seeing that child to be thus conceived, he should be called, that is, owned to be, the Son of God. He says not, Therefore that holy thing shall be the Son of God, for he was the Son of God before, by virtue of his eternal generation; but, Therefore he shall be called, i. e. owned to be really so, and more than a man. The reason of this is, because Isaiah had

prophesied that the Son of God should be the Son of a virgin. When therefore you, a virgin, shall conceive, your child shall be acknowledged to be the Son of God in man's nature. Matth. 1:22, 23. 'Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us.' He was promised to the church as the Messiah, 'a child born unto us, a son given unto us,' Isa. 9:6. And he actually was so, Luke 2:11.

DOCT. 'Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became man, by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. Who she was that was the mother of Christ as man.

II. What we are to understand by his becoming man.

III. That he was true man.

IV. What we are to understand by his being conceived of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin Mary.

V. Why he was born of a virgin.

VI. Make application in a few inferences.

I. I am to shew who she was that was the mother of Christ as man. Christ as God had no mother, and as man no father. But his mother as man was Mary. She was the seed of Abraham; and so Christ was that seed of Abraham, in whom all nations were to be blessed, Gal. 3:16. She was of the tribe of Judah, Luke 3:33 and of that tribe Christ by her did spring, Heb. 7:14. She was also of the family of David, as appears by her genealogy, Luke 3 and therefore Christ is called the

Son of David, as the Messiah behoved to be. She was, however, but a mean woman, the family of David being then reduced to a low outward condition in the world, having long before lost its flourishing state; so that our Lord 'sprung up as a root out of a dry ground,' Isa. 11:1 and 53:2.

She was a virgin before and at the time of her bringing forth Jesus, but espoused to Joseph, who was of the same tribe with her. What she was after, I think Christians should raise no question about that matter, seeing the scripture has buried it in silence. And therefore, as they are presumptuous who would always make her being a virgin an article of faith, so they are rash that would define the contrary. For they are but little versed in the scripture, who know not that kinsmen among the Jews are ordinarily in sacred writ called brethren; as Abraham and Lot, his brother's son, are called brethren, Gen. 13:8. So no argument can be drawn from persons being designed the brethren of Christ, in the evangelists, to prove that Mary bore children to Joseph.

II. I come to shew what we are to understand by Christ's becoming man. It implies,

1. That he had a real being and existence before his incarnation. He truly was before he was conceived in the womb of the virgin, and distinct from that being which was conceived in her. He tells us himself, that he was in heaven before he ascended thither: 'What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?' John 6:62. Yea, he was with his Father from all eternity, before any of the creatures came out of the womb of nothing. So Prov. 8:29, 30, 'When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth. Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.' Here the Spirit of God describes the most blessed state of Jesus Christ, from those eternal delights which he had had with his Father before his assumption of our nature, 'Then I was by him,' or 'with him:' he was so with him, as

never any other was, even in his very bosom, John 1:18. 'The word was with God,' ver. 1. And he calls himself 'the bread of life that came down from heaven,' chap. 6 ver. 33. Here he opposeth himself to the manna, wherewith God fed the Israelites in the wilderness, which never was really in heaven, nor had its original from thence. 'Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but the Father gave you Christ really from thence.' John 16:28. 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.' He is called 'Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.'

2. That he actually took upon him our nature. He assumed the entire nature of man into the unity of his divine person, with all its integral parts and essential properties; and so was made or became a real and true man by that assumption. Hence it is said, John 1:14. 'The Word was made flesh.' But though Jesus Christ had two natures, yet not two persons, which was the error of Nestorius, who lived in the fourth century. He so rent the natures of Christ asunder, as to make two distinct persons of them, and consequently two Christs, of which one was crucified at Jerusalem, and the other not, as he blasphemously alleged; and so he plainly denied the hypostatical union of the divine and human natures in the person of our blessed Redeemer. But though Christ had two natures, yet but one person: for his human nature never subsisted separately and distinctly by any personal subsistence of its own, as it is in all other men; but, from the first moment of his conception, it subsisted in union with the second person of the adorable Trinity. Again, though 'the Word was made flesh,' yet it was without any confusion of the natures, or change of the one into the other: which was the heresy of the Eutychians of old, who so confounded the two natures in the person of Christ, that they denied all distinction between them. Eutyches thought that the union was so made in the natures of Christ, that the humanity was absorbed and wholly turned into the divine nature; so that, by that transubstantiation, the human nature had no longer being. To oppose this heresy, the ancient fathers did very fitly make use of the sacramental union between the bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ, and thereby shewed that the human nature

of Christ is no more really converted into the Divinity, and so ceaseth to be the human nature, than the substance of the bread and wine is really converted into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, and thereby ceaseth to be both bread and wine. But by this union the human nature is so united with the Divinity, that each retains its own essential properties distinct. The properties of either nature are preserved entire. It is impossible that the majesty of the Divinity can receive any alteration; and it is as impossible that the meanness of the humanity can receive the impression of the Deity, so as to be changed into it, and a creature be metamorphosed into the Creator, and temporary flesh become eternal, and finite mount up into infinite. As the soul and the body are united, and make one person; yet the soul is not changed into the perfections of the body, nor the body into the perfections of the soul. There is a change indeed made in the humanity, by its being advanced to a more excellent union, but not in the Deity; as a change is made in the air when it is enlightened by the sun, not in the sun which communicates that brightness to the air. Athanasius makes the burning bush to be a type of Christ's incarnation; the fire signifying the divine nature, and the bush the human. The bush is a branch springing from the earth, and the fire descends from heaven. As the bush was united to the fire, yet was not hurt by the flame, nor converted into the fire, there remained a difference between the bush and the fire, yet the properties of fire shined in the bush, so that the whole bush seemed to be on fire: So in the incarnation of Christ, the human nature is not swallowed up by the divine, nor changed into it, nor confounded with it: but they are so united, that the properties of both remain firm: two are so become one, that they remain two still; one person in two natures, containing the glorious perfections of the Divinity, and the weakness of the humanity. The fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Christ.

3. Christ's becoming man implies the voluntariness of this act of his in assuming the human nature. When he was solacing himself in the bosom of the Father with the sweetest pleasures that heaven could afford, yet even then the very prospect of his incarnation afforded him unspeakable delight, Prov. 8:31. 'Rejoicing in the habitable part

of the earth, and my delights were the sons of men.' See what is said, Psal. 40:6, 7, 8. 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.' And when he was in the world, and had endured many abuses and injuries from sinners, and contradictions of them against himself, and was even come to the most difficult part of his work, yet even then he could say, 'How am I straitened (or pained) until it be accomplished!' Luke 12:50. He longed to have the work of Redemption finished, for which he had assumed the human nature, that thereby he might be fitted and qualified for suffering. He cheerfully assumed our nature, that so he might be capable to suffer, and thereby satisfy offended justice for his people's sins. He was not forced or constrained to become man, but he willingly laid aside the robes of his Divinity, and cloathed himself with the infirmities of the flesh. Yea, if he had not willingly engaged to take on our nature, and die for our sins, divine justice could not have accepted of his blood as the price of our redemption.

III. I proceed to shew, that Christ was true man. Being the eternal Son of God, he became man, by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul. He had the same human nature which is common to all men, sin only excepted. He is called in scripture 'man,' and 'the Son of man, the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the Son of David,' &c; which designations could not have been given unto him, if he had not been true man. And it is said, Heb. 2:14, 15, 16. 'Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same. He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.' And so he became not an angel, but a man. As man consists of two essential parts, body and soul; so did Christ. He had a real body of flesh, blood, and bones, not a fantastical body, which is only a body in appearance. Hence he said to his affrighted disciples, when they thought they had seen a

spirit when he first appeared to them after the resurrection,' Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: Handle me and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have,' Luke 24:39. He was born with a body which was prepared for him, of the same appearance with those of other infants. He increased in stature, and grew up by degrees; and was so far from being sustained without the ordinary nourishment wherewith our bodies are preserved; that he was observed by his enemies to come eating and drinking; and when he did not so, he suffered hunger and thirst. The thorns that pricked the sacred temples of his head, the nails which penetrated through his hands and his feet, and the spear that pierced his blessed side, gave sufficient proof and testimony of the natural tenderness and frailty of his flesh.—The actions and passions of his life shew that he had true flesh. He was hungry, thirsty, weary, faint, &c. As therefore we believe that Christ came into the world, so we must own that he came in the verity of our human nature, even in true and proper flesh. With this determinate expression it was always necessary to acknowledge him. For every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God, and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God,' 1 John 4:2, 3. This spirit appeared very early in the Christian church, in opposition to the apostolical doctrine: and Christ, who is both God and man, was as soon denied to be man as God. Simon Magus, the arch-heretic, first began, and many afterward followed him. And as Christ had a true body, so he had also a rational soul. For certainly, if the Son of God would stoop so low as to take upon him our frail flesh, he would not omit the nobler part, the soul, without which he could not be man. We are told that Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, the one in respect of his body, the other in respect of his soul. Wisdom belongeth not to the flesh, nor can the knowledge of God, which is infinite, admit of an increase or addition. He then, whose knowledge did improve together with his years, must have a subject proper for, and capable of it, which was no other than a human soul. This was the seat of his finite understanding and directed will, distinct from the will of his Father, and consequently that of his divine nature, as appears by that known submission with respect to his drinking the

cup of divine wrath; 'Not my will but thine be done,' says he. This was the subject of those affections and passions which so manifestly appeared in the course of his life, and particularly when he breathed forth that language, when entering upon his last sufferings, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.' This was it which on the cross, immediately before his departure, he committed to his Father's care, Luke 23:46. 'Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit.' And as his death was nothing else but the separation of his soul from his body, so the life of Christ, as man, consisted in the vital union and conjunction of that soul with the body. So that he who was perfect God was also perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Which is to be observed, and asserted against the ancient heretics, who taught that Christ assumed human flesh; but the Word, or his Divinity, was unto that body in place of a soul. As he could not have been real man without a real body and reasonable soul, which are the two essential and constituent parts of man, so he could not have borne the punishment of his people's sins, if he had not suffered in both. They had forfeited both soul and body to divine justice, and should have suffered in both for ever in hell; and therefore Christ, when he substituted himself in their room, suffered both in his body and in his soul. The sufferings of his body were indeed very great; it was filled with exquisite torture and pain; but his soul sufferings were much greater, as I observed in a former discourse.

IV. I come now to shew what we are to understand by Christ's being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary. This is a great mystery, beyond the reach and comprehension of a finite mind. The conception of our blessed Saviour was miraculous and supernatural, above the methods of nature. To open this a little three things are to be considered here.

1. The framing of Christ's human nature in the womb of the virgin.
2. The sanctifying of it.

3. The personal union of the manhood with the Godhead.

First, Let us consider the framing of the human nature of Christ in the womb of the virgin Mary. In the text the act is expressed to be the effect of the infinite power of God. And it sets forth the supernatural manner of forming the humanity of our blessed Saviour. The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, and by an act of creative power frame the humanity of Christ, and unite it to the Divinity. In the framing of Christ's manhood, we are to consider the matter and the manner of it. The matter of his body was of the very flesh and blood of the virgin, otherwise he could not have been the Son of David, of Abraham, and Adam, according to the flesh. Indeed God might have created his body out of nothing, or have formed it of the dust of the ground, as he did the body of Adam, our original Progenitor: but had he been thus extraordinarily formed, and not propagated from Adam, though he had been a man like one of us, yet he would not have been of kin to us; because it would not have been a nature derived from Adam, the common parent of us all. It was therefore requisite to an affinity with us, not only that he should have the same human nature, but that it should flow from the same principle, and be propagated to him. And thus he is of the same nature that sinned, and so what he did and suffered may be imputed to us. Whereas, if he had been created as Adam was, it could not have been claimed in a legal and judicial way. Now, the Holy Ghost prepared the matter of Christ's body of the substance of the virgin; and he formed it of the matter thus prepared. Hence says Christ, 'A body hast thou prepared me,' Heb. 10:5. And says the apostle, Gal. 4:4. 'God sent forth his Son made of a woman.' The Holy Ghost sanctified that part of the virgin's substance whereof the body of Christ was to be formed, purging it from all sin and taint of impurity. For though a man cannot, yet God can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, and endue it with a capacity for the generation of a human body, which otherwise it would not have had alone. Though Christ was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin, yet we are not to think that he was made of the substance of the Holy Ghost, whose

essence cannot be at all made. The Holy Ghost did not beget him by any communication of his essence; and therefore he is not the Father of Christ, though he was conceived by his power. The Holy Ghost did not minister any matter unto Christ from his own substance. Hence Basil says, Christ was conceived, not of the substance, but by the power, not by any generation, but by appointment and benediction of the Holy Ghost. And as for his soul, it was not derived from the soul of the virgin, as a part thereof; for spiritual substances are indivisible and impartible; and nothing can be cut off from them. But it was created and made of nothing by the divine power, as all other souls are. Hence God is called 'the Father of spirits,' Heb. 12:9 and is said to 'form the spirit of man within him,' Zech. 12:1. Here the forming of the soul of man is joined with these two glorious effects of God's creative power, the expansion of the heavens, and laying the foundations of the earth. Our Saviour's spirit was created by God, and infused into his body, when fitly organized to receive it. Again, the manner of framing the human nature of Christ is also to be considered; and that was extraordinary and miraculous, not by generation according to the ordinary and stated course of nature, but by an extraordinary operation of the Holy Ghost above the laws of nature: and for this cause it exceeds the compass of human reason, and the highest reach of created understandings, either to conceive or express the order and manner of his conception.

Secondly, Let us consider the sanctifying of Christ's human nature. I have already said, that that part of the flesh of the virgin, whereof the human nature of Christ was made, was purified and refined from all corruption by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, as a skilful workman separates the dross from the gold. Our Saviour was therefore called that holy thing, Luke 1:35. Now, this sanctification of the human nature of Christ was necessary.

1. To fit it for personal union with the Word, who, out of his infinite love, humbled himself to become flesh, and at the same time out of his infinite purity, could not defile himself by becoming sinful flesh.

2. With respect to the end of his incarnation, even the redemption and salvation of lost sinners; that as the first Adam was the fountain of our impurity, so the second Adam should also be the pure fountain of our righteousness. God 'sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemned sin in the flesh;' which he could not have condemned, had he been sent in sinful flesh. The Father 'made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;' which we could never have been made, if he had been tainted with any sin. He that needed redemption himself could never have purchased redemption for us.

Thirdly, We are to consider the personal union of the manhood with the Godhead. To clear this a little, you would know,

1. That when Christ assumed our nature, it was not united consubstantially, so as the three persons in the Godhead are united among themselves; they all have but one and the same nature and will: but in Christ there are two distinct natures and wills, though but one person.

2. They are not united physically, as the soul and body are united in a man: For death actually dissolves that union; but this is indissoluble. So that when his soul was expired, and his body interred, both soul and body were still united to the second person as much as ever.

3. Nor yet is this such a mystical union as is between Christ and believers. Indeed this is a glorious union. But though believers are said to be in Christ, and Christ in them, yet they are not one person with him.

But more positively, this assumption of which I speak is that whereby the second person in the glorious Godhead did take the human nature into a personal union with himself, by virtue whereof the manhood subsists in the second person, yet without confusion, as I shewed already, both making but one person Immanuel, God with us. So that though there be a twofold nature in Christ, yet not a

double person. For the human nature of Christ never subsisted separately and distinctly by any personal subsistence of its own, as it doth in all other men; but from the first moment of conception subsisted in union with the second person of the adorable Trinity, in a miraculous and extraordinary manner, being supernaturally framed within the womb of the virgin by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. Again, as it was produced miraculously, so it was assumed integrally; that is to say, Christ took a complete and perfect soul and body, with all and every faculty and member pertaining to it. And this was necessary, that thereby he might heal the whole nature of the disease and leprosy of sin, which had seized upon and wofully infected every member and faculty of man. Christ assumed all, to sanctify all. He designed a perfect recovery by sanctifying us wholly in soul, body, and spirit: and therefore he assumed the whole in order to it. Again, he assumed our nature with all its sinless infirmities: therefore it is said of him, Heb. 2:17. 'In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.' But here we are to distinguish between personal and natural infirmities. Personal infirmities are such as befall particular persons, from particular causes, as dumbness, deafness, blindness, lameness, leprosy, &c. Now, it was no way necessary that Christ should assume these; but the natural ones, such as hunger, thirst, weariness, sweating, bleeding, mortality, &c. These he was subject unto, which, though they are not in themselves formally and intrinsically sinful, yet they are the effects and consequents of sin. They are so many marks and stains that sin hath left of itself upon our natures; and upon that account Christ is said to 'be sent in the likeness of sinful flesh,' Rom. 8:3. Again, the human nature is so united with the divine, that each nature still retains its own essential properties distinct. And this distinction is not, nor can be lost by that union. The humanity was indeed changed by a communication of excellent gifts from the divine nature; but not by being brought into an equality with it: for it was impossible that a creature should become equal to the Creator. He took upon him the form of a servant, but he lost not the form of God. He despoiled not himself of the perfections of the Deity, by taking upon him the humanity. The glory of his Divinity was not

extinguished or diminished, though it was eclipsed and obscured under the vail of our humanity; but there was no more change in the hiding of it, than there is in the body of the sun, when he is shadowed by the interposition of a cloud. And this union of the two natures in Christ is an inseparable union; so that from the first moment thereof, there never was, nor to all eternity shall there ever be any separation of them.

Quest. But how did this union remain between them, when Christ's human soul and body were separated from each other upon the cross! Ans. Though the natural union between his soul and body was dissolved by death for a time, yet the hypostatical union between his divine and human nature remained as entire and firm as ever. For though his soul and body were divided from each other, yet neither of them were separated from the divine nature, but still subsisted as they did before, by the subsistence of the second person of the Trinity. And though Christ cried upon the cross with a loud voice, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' yet that did not imply a dissolution of that union: for if that dereliction should signify a dissolution of the former union of his natures, the separation had been made in his life, and not at his death; for he made this dolorous complaint before he gave up the ghost. But these words infer no more, but that he was bereft of such joy and comfort from the Deity, as should allay and mitigate the bitterness of his present troubles. And therefore when our Saviour yielded up the ghost, he suffered only an external violence; and what was subject to such corporeal force did yield unto these dolorous impressions: and the imbecility and frailty of our nature being such, that life cannot subsist long in exquisite torments, the disposition of his body failed the soul, and the soul deserted his body. But because no power hath force against omnipotence, nor could any finite agent work upon the union made with the Word, therefore that did still remain entire, both as to the soul and to the body.

V. I now proceed to shew, why Christ was born of a virgin. That Christ was to be born of a virgin, was prophesied and foretold many

ages before his incarnation, as Isa. 7:14. 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.' Now, that the mother of Jesus was that virgin spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, is evident from the testimony of the evangelists, particularly Mat. 1:18, &c. It was not convenient that he should be born in the common order of father and mother; for if he had been so born, he would have been a natural son of Adam, and so represented by him in the covenant of works, and an heir of Adam's sin, as others are that are born by virtue of the blessing of marriage. By such a birth he had been polluted and defiled with sin: 'For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean;' Job 14:4. The Redeemer of the world behoved to be so born, as not to derive the stain of man's nature by his generation. For if he had been tainted with the least spot of our corruption, he had been incapable of being a Redeemer: he could never have redeemed others who stood in need of redemption himself. And although God by his almighty power, had perfectly sanctified an earthly father and mother and cleansed them from all original sin, that so the human nature might have been transmitted immaculate to him, as well as the Holy Ghost did purge that part of the flesh of the virgin of which the body of Christ was made, yet it was not convenient, that that person, who was God blessed for ever, as well as man, in partaking of our nature, should have a conception in the same manner with ours, but different from it, and in some measure conformable to the infinite dignity of his person; which could not have been, had not a supernatural and a divine person been concerned as an active principle in it. Besides, such a birth had not been agreeable to the first promise, which calls him the seed of the woman, not of the man; and so the truth and veracity of God had suffered some detriment by it. The seed of the woman only is set in opposition to the seed of the serpent. By his being born of a virgin, the holiness of his nature is effectually secured. This exempted him from the stain and pollution of Adam's sin, which his nature wholly escaped, in that he received it not as all others do, in the way of ordinary generation, wherein original sin is propagated: but this being extraordinarily produced, was a most pure and holy thing. Christ was an extraordinary person, and another Adam; and

therefore it was necessary he should be produced a new way. At first Adam was produced neither of man nor woman; Eve of a man without a woman; all others of a man and a woman. The fourth way remained, viz. of a woman without a man; and so Christ was born. And the wisdom of God appeared in that he was born of a virgin espoused; for thereby the reproach of illegitimacy was warded off; he had Joseph to take care of him in his infancy; his mother's good name and life were preserved from the malicious Jews; and our faith was the more confirmed by Joseph's testimony concerning Mary.

Thus we may be thoroughly satisfied,

1. That Christ had a true human body; and that though he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, he had not merely the likeness of flesh, but true flesh, Luke 24:39. Heb. 2:14.
2. That he had a reasonable soul, which was a created spirit, and that the divine nature was not instead of a soul to him. When he died, he commended his spirit to God, Luke 23:46. There is in him a created and an uncreated understanding and will, Mark 13:32. Luke 22:42. Thus he was true man, consisting of soul and body. And the human nature being united to the divine, there were great gifts of holiness, wisdom, &c. in the human nature of Christ, by virtue of this union, which yet were not infinite, Luke 2:52.
3. That Christ's body was not made of any substance sent down from heaven, but of the substance of the virgin, Gal. 4:4. He was 'the seed of the woman,' Gen. 3:15 and the fruit of Mary's womb, Luke 1:42 otherwise he had not been our brother.
4. That the Holy Ghost cannot be called the Father of Christ, since his human nature was formed, not of his substance, but of that of the virgin, by his power.
5. That though as to the nativity of Christ there was nothing as to the way of it extraordinary, but he was at the ordinary time brought forth as others, Luke 2:22, 23 and that as a general truth, 'A woman, when

she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come,' John 16:21 yet he was born without sin, being that holy thing. He could not have been our Redeemer, had he not been so. Heb. 7:26. Neither could he have sinned, seeing the human nature was put beyond that capacity, by its union with the divine; and whatsoever Christ did or could do was the action of that person who was God, and so free from sin.

6. That the reason why Christ was born without sin, and the sin of Adam did not reach him, was because he came not of Adam by ordinary generation, not by the blessing of marriage, but by a special promise after the fall.

I shall conclude all with some inferences.

1. Jesus Christ is the true Messiah promised to Adam as the seed of the woman, to Abraham as his seed, the Shiloh mentioned by Jacob on his death bed, the Prophet spoken of by Moses to be raised from among the children of Israel, the Son of David, and the Son to be born of a virgin.

2. Behold the wonderful love of God the Father, who was content to degrade and abase his dear Son, in order to bring about the salvation of sinners. How astonishing is it, that he should send his only-begotten Son to assume our nature, and bear that dreadful wrath and punishment that we deserved?

3. See here the wonderful love, and astonishing condescendency of the Son, to be born of a woman, in order that he might die in the room of sinners. O how low did he stoop and humble himself, in assuming human nature, with all its sinless infirmities, in being subject to his own law, exposed to all manner of injurious usage from wicked men, to the temptations of Satan, and at last suffering a shameful and ignominious death! What great love to sinners, and what unparalleled condescension was here!

4. See here the cure of our being conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity. Christ was born of a woman for us, and he was born

without sin for us, that the holiness of his nature might be imputed to us as a part of that righteousness which constitutes the condition of our justification before God. In him is a complete righteousness for our guilt, and a fountain for washing away. our spiritual pollution.

5. Christ is sensibly touched with all the infirmities that attend our frail nature, and has pity and compassion upon his people under all their pressures and burdens. Hence the apostle says, Heb. 2:17, 18. 'In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.' How comfortable is it to believers to consider, that he who is their great High Priest in heaven, is clothed with their nature, to capacitate and qualify him to have compassion on them in all their troubles and distresses.

6. Let this encourage sinners to come unto him, that they may be united unto him by faith, and so partake of the blessings of his purchase. Come and enter into a marriage-relation with him. Sin shall not stop the match, if ye be willing. He that could sanctify the virgin's substance to make it a sinless piece of flesh, can easily sanctify you. And he that united the human nature to his divine person, can also unite you to himself, so as ye shall never be separated from him.

OF CHRIST'S OFFICES IN GENERAL

ZECH. 6:13.—Even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a Priest upon his throne.

HAVING shewn that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Redeemer of elect sinners, and that it was necessary he should be God and man in one person, to qualify him for his Mediatory undertaking, I come now to speak of the offices which Christ executes as our Redeemer, from the text now read.

In the 11th verse of this chapter, there is a typical action crowning Joshua the high priest with two crowns, which is applied and explained in the following verses as representing Christ in his offices, who has on his head many crowns. In the 12th verse, there is a prophecy of the incarnation of Christ, under the metaphor of a branch, as sprung from the family of David, and making but a mean appearance in the world, 'as a root out of a dry ground.' In the verse where our text lies, we have the offices which he was to execute as our Redeemer; which are three.

1. The office of a Prophet; He shall build the temple of the Lord; that is, his own church, whereof the temple was a type, by the word of the gospel, which it is his work to promulgate as a Prophet. For the church is 'built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone,' and the revealer of those truths which the prophets and apostles taught.

2. The office of a Priest; namely to expiate the sins of his people to purchase peace for them, and to manage their cause with God.

3. That of a King; for he has a throne, which denotes his kingly office. He is a Priest upon his throne, denoting the reward of his sufferings, and the high dignity he is advanced to in consequence of his

humiliation and satisfactory sufferings. And he is represented as sitting on his throne, not a King in name only, or an inactive monarch, but exercising acts of jurisdiction and government. In him all the glory of these offices is to meet: and these offices he shall hold and exercise in spite of all opposition: He shall sit and rule upon his throne.

The text affords foundation for the following doctrine, viz.

DOCT. 'Christ, as our Redeemer, executeth the offices of a Prophet, of a Priest, and of a King, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. The verity of these offices in Christ.

II. The necessity of his exercising them as our Redeemer.

III. When he did exercise these offices.

IV. Lastly, Deduce some inferences.

1. I am to shew the verity or reality of these offices in Christ. I say then, that Christ as our Redeemer is actually invested with these offices; he is truly a Prophet, a Priest, and a King; and also that he executes them, that is, performs the functions of, or what belongs to these offices. This clearly appears,

1. From plain scripture testimony, (1.) To his having or being possessed of these offices.—He is a Prophet, that Prophet foretold by Moses, who was to be heard in all things that he should say; and of whom it is said, 'That every soul that would not hear him, should be destroyed from among the people, Acts 3:22, 23 which passage is applied to Jesus Christ by the apostle Peter, and can agree to none but him, who teacheth as never man taught, even with authority and power.—He is a Priest. So he is expressly called, Heb. 5:6. 'Thou art a

Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec;' and in several other places of that epistle, where the reality, nature, and end of his priesthood are largely described.—He is a King: Psal. 2:6. 'Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.' Psal. 110:2. 'Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.' He has all the ensigns of royal authority. The ceremony of inauguration or anointing to his office, Psal. 2:6. Heb. 'I have anointed my King upon my holy hill of Zion;' a crown, Psal. 21:3; a sword, Psal. 45:3; a sceptre, Psal. 65:6; subjects, Luke 1:33. John 1:49. (2.) The scriptures bear witness to his executing these offices. Hence he says himself, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life,' John 14:6. He is the way to life and happiness by his death; the truth in his word, the sum and substance of all revealed truth; and the life in his Spirit, quickening and preserving his people by his power. He 'of God is made unto his people wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption:' wisdom as a Prophet, righteousness as a Priest, and sanctification and redemption as a King.

2. We learn this also from his name Christ, or Messiah, which signifies the anointed One, I told you in a former discourse, that three sorts of persons used to be anointed under the law, viz. Prophets, 1 Kings 19:16; priests, as Aaron, Exod. 29:7; and kings, as David and others. But all these offices meet in Christ, who was anointed for the execution of them. Hence he says himself, Isa. 61:1. 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.' He is anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek, as a Prophet; to bind up the broken-hearted, as a Priest; and to proclaim liberty, as a King. He was not anointed with material oil, as the prophets, priests, and kings, under the Old Testament dispensation were, but with the oil of the Spirit;' The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me (says he), because the Lord hath anointed me.' And God is said to have 'anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows,' Psal. 45:7. Now, this unction signified, (1.) His being set apart to the Mediatory work, and

to these offices: the Father 'sanctified him, and sent him into the world,' John 10:36. (2.) His being fully furnished with gifts and qualifications suitable to these offices, in respect of his human nature, to which the Spirit was given, not by measure, Isa. 11:1, 2. &c. but in fulness, not of sufficiency only, but abundance, not the fulness of a vessel, but of a fountain, in order to communicate liberally unto his people, John 1:16. He was solemnly inaugurated to these offices at his baptism, Mat. 3:17 at his transfiguration, Mat. 17:5 and at his exaltation, Acts 2:36. And he was as solemnly called to these offices, Heb. 5:4, 5. 'No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron': so also, Christ glorified not himself, to be made an High Priest; but he that said unto him, 'Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee'.

II. Let us next consider the necessity of his exercising these offices. Christ's incarnation and taking on him the work of our redemption was entirely voluntary, without the least shadow of co-action and compulsion; but seeing he was pleased out of his great kindness to us, to become our Redeemer, it was necessary for our salvation that he should execute all these three offices. This will be clear, if we,

1. Consider our misery by sin, ignorance, guilt, and bondage. We were ignorant of the way of returning to God again; and therefore Christ as our Prophet must teach us. We durst not look him in the face, being covered with guilt? and therefore Christ as a Priest must make atonement, and remove our guilt. We were in bondage to sin and Satan, and could not return to God, nor recover ourselves out of our thralldom; therefore Christ as a King delivers us, brings us back again, leading captivity captive. As a Prophet he gives light to the blind, as a Priest he brings merit, and as a King power.

2. Consider the salvation which the elect were to be made partakers of. It behoved to be revealed unto them, seeing of themselves they could never discover it, being quite blind and ignorant; and therefore our Redeemer became a Prophet to reveal the things that concern our salvation unto us, and instruct us therein. It behoved to be

purchased for sinners, who, being weak and unfit for any spiritual work, could never purchase it for themselves: therefore he became a Priest to purchase life and eternal redemption for us. It behoved to be applied by the power of his Spirit; for as sinners could not purchase salvation, far less could they apply it to themselves: therefore Christ became a King. The slaves could never have raised their ransom, nor known it after it was paid, far less before; and they were unwilling to come out of their bondage. And therefore it behoved our Redeemer to be invested with these three offices.

3. Consider Christ as Mediator of the covenant, who behoved to deal with both parties, in order to bring them together. God was offended with our sin and guilt; and therefore for us he behoved to be a Priest, to satisfy law and justice, and intercede for our pardon. We knew not what was in agitation between the Father and the Son; and therefore he behoved to be a revealer of that grace, and merciful contrivance. We were unwilling to deal with God; therefore he behoved, as a King, to bring us to submit and yield to his government. The benefits of the covenant he behoved to purchase, reveal, and administer.

4. Consider the work of conversion. The soul must be enlightened, by the conviction of the Prophet, to see its misery, and the suitableness of the remedy: upon the sight of its misery, the soul would despair, were not the blood of the Priest to sprinkle the conscience; and the will would never yield, if it felt not the power of his conquering sword.

5. Consider our daily necessities. Are we not every day in the dark about something? What should become of us, if we had not the great Prophet to go to for instruction and direction? We are every day contracting new guilt: what would be our case, if there were not a lasting merit and an abiding Advocate? Are we not always needing protection against our enemies? how then should we break through the armies of hell, if our King were not on our head, to subdue them under us?

6. Lastly, Consider the promises, which are the stay and staff of the Christian's life, without which they could never bear up. Christ's offices are the source and spring of all these. How precious are the promises of illumination, guidance, direction, &c. to the blind and those who know not the way? These flow from Christ's prophetic office. 'Behold, (says Jehovah), I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people,' Isa. 55:4. How precious are promises of peace, pardon, and reconciliation, to those who are disquieted with fears, with guilt and sin? These flow from his Priestly office. And the promises of protection and deliverance to captives flow from his Kingly office. All the promises are the purchase of the blood of Christ; and they are all yea and amen in him, and flow from and through him.

III. I come now to shew, when Christ did execute these offices. As he was the Redeemer of the church in all ages, so did he execute these offices in all ages of the church. In the Old Testament he was the great Prophet of the church; for it is said, John 1:18. 'No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' He brought the glad tidings of salvation unto sinners in all the discoveries thereof from the first gospel-promise until his manifestation in the flesh. And he not only reveals the things concerning salvation unto men, but teaches them, and gives men an understanding to apprehend and know them. He was a Prophet unto the church in the wilderness: Hence it is said, Exod. 23:20. 'Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice.' And we read, that by the Spirit he went and preached unto the spirits in prison,' 1 Pet. 3:19 that is, unto the sinners in the old world, by the ministry of Noah, who, not repenting, were then, at the time the apostle wrote, in the prison of hell. He was also their Priest, interceding, on the ground of his future sufferings, for his people. Of this we have a remarkable instance, Zech. 1:12. 'O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?' And he was their King, the Captain of the

Lord's host, who led and conducted them, delivered them from the Egyptian bondage, guided them through the howling wilderness, placed them in Canaan, instituted their whole religious worship and service, &c.

But more especially Christ executed these offices after his incarnation, and that in his twofold estate of humiliation and exaltation. These are his two estates, of which the apostle speaks, Phil. 2:8, 9. 'Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.'

He was a prophet while on earth, and still is revealing by his Word and Spirit the will of God for the salvation of his people. The whole doctrine of the Bible was taught by him; and it is by him that all saving knowledge is communicated to this day, and will be to the end of time.

He was a Priest in his state of humiliation, as well as he is in his state of exaltation. He offered his sacrifice on the earth, and therefore was a Priest there. Hence saith the apostle, Eph. 5:2. 'Christ—hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.' Nor did he ascend into heaven, till by his sacrifice he had 'purged away our sins,' Heb. 1:3. And he continues an interceding Priest for ever, Heb. 7:25.

He was also a King in his state of humiliation. He was born a King, Matth. 2:2 went into Jerusalem as a King, in accomplishment of an ancient prophecy concerning him, Matth. 21:5 owned himself to be a King before Pilate, Matth. 27:11. It was the Lord of glory that was crucified, 1 Cor. 2:8. And he is now exalted to his throne, and is styled, 'King of kings, and Lord of lords,' and will reign till all his enemies be made his footstool, and all his subjects be brought home to glory.

Here it may be observed, that these three offices, which Christ executes, are not to be divided, especially when they are executed in a way that is effectual for the salvation of the subjects thereof. He may indeed objectively reveal the will of God, and give laws to his church, as a Prophet, without giving them the unction whereby those who are savingly taught of God know all things necessary to salvation: and he may execute his regal office, as a Judge, in inflicting heavy judgments and calamities on his enemies, without subduing them to that obedience and subjection to him which is the privilege of real believers. Yet it is a certain truth, that wherever he executes one of these offices in a saying way, he executes them all. In this respect, though the offices are distinct, yet they are not divided. For whosoever is taught by him as a Prophet, so as to be made wise unto salvation, is redeemed unto God by his blood as a Priest, and is subdued by his power as a King, and made a willing subject to him: and all whose sins are expiated by him as a Priest, shall, in his own time, be savingly taught by him as a Prophet, and made his willing subjects as a King, in the day of his power.

A few inferences shall shut up this subject.

1. How great and how glorious is our Lord Jesus Christ, who was meet to bear all these offices at once, and exercise them at once, so as one does not mar or clash with another! He is glorious indeed in whom all the glory scattered amongst the typical persons is perfectly concentered. If it was an honour to Melchizedec, to be both a priest and a king, and David to be both a king and a prophet; how much more glorious is it for our divine Mediator to be a Prophet, a Priest, and a King, really possessed of these offices, and exercising them in their full extent, in a more efficacious manner than any person that was ever invested with any of them on earth!

2. Let this commend Christ unto you as a full and a suitable Saviour. There is no case a poor sinner can be in, but he will find the remedy of it in these offices of Christ. Art thou, O sinner, under spiritual darkness and ignorance? There is knowledge and instruction to be

had from him. He is the light of the world and can give thee an understanding to know him that is true, he can give thee the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Art thou under guilt and condemnation, laden with sin that is like to sink thee to hell? There is righteousness in him as a Priest to remove thy guilt. He is the atonement and propitiation for sin. He saves from sin and wrath. Art thou a slave to sin and Satan? He is a King, who came to destroy the works of the devil: he can break the dominion of sin in thee, knock off thy fetters, and subdue all thy spiritual enemies.

3. Ye cannot take Christ, as a Redeemer, if ye take him not in all his offices. He offers himself to sinners no other way. And what God has joined together let no man put asunder. Many pretend to take Christ as a Saviour to save them from hell and wrath, who do not hearken to him as a Prophet to teach them the saving knowledge of God, nor submit to his laws and commandments. How many call Christ their Lord, and yet do not the things that he saith? O the folly of the world, that reject Christ's teaching, saying, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways! O the stupidity of those who despise Christ as a Priest, and think to recommend themselves to the divine favour by their own works of righteousness, which they substitute in the room of his righteousness! O the madness of those who contemn Christ as a King, refusing to submit to his royal authority, and who spurn at his laws and government! And how foolish are the princes of the earth that will not suffer Christ to reign freely in their dominions, but encroach on his authority, and make laws opposite to and inconsistent with his!

4. Do ye receive Christ in all his offices, giving up yourselves to be taught by him as a Prophet, in all things relating to your salvation, renouncing your own knowledge and wisdom; to be justified by his righteousness, and washed in his blood, renouncing all your own righteousness, as filthy rags, saying, in the Lord alone have I righteousness, and counting all things but loss and dung, that ye may win Christ, and be found in him, not having your own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, even

the righteousness which is of God by faith;' and to be guided and conducted, ruled and governed by him as your Sovereign Lord and King, yielding a hearty and cheerful obedience to all his laws and commandments, and saying, 'Other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.'

5. Employ this mighty Redeemer in all the offices wherewith he is invested, and which as Mediator he exercises for the benefit of the ruined race of mankind. Ye have absolute need of him in all these offices. Ye are witless and foolish, and stand in need of his wisdom to guide and direct you; and ye are ignorant both of yourselves and of God, and so require saving knowledge and instruction. Ye are guilty and condemned sinners, nay, daily offenders, and so stand in need of pardon, nay, of continual pardons. Ye are weak, and have no strength to combat your spiritual adversaries, and so require the exertion of his mighty power as King of kings to cause you stand against your adversaries. If you knew yourselves, and were exercised to godliness, you would see the absolute necessity of all Christ's offices for your salvation, and would every day bless God for such a complete and all-sufficient Redeemer. O make use of him daily in all his glorious offices, and honour him by putting employment in his hand, as your Prophet, Priest, and King.

OF CHRIST'S PROPHETICAL OFFICE

ACTS 3:22.—A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren like unto me: him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

HAVING shewn that the Lord Jesus Christ, as our Redeemer, is invested with, and actually executes the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King, I come now to speak of these offices distinctly; and shall

begin with his prophetical office, which is plainly asserted in the words now read.

Here the apostle Peter shews the Jews, Moses pointing to Christ as the great Prophet of the church. Moses had told the Israelites in the wilderness, Deut. 18:15. 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.' Peter tells the Jews, that this eminent Prophet was now come, and exhorts them to submit unto his instructions. In the words we have,

1. A description of Christ as to his prophetical office, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you. Where

1st, Christ is described by his title, a Prophet, and that the Prince of all the Prophets, or the 'great,' or 'chief Shepherd,' as he is styled by the apostles. It belongs to a prophet, by virtue of his office, to expound the law, declare the will of God, and foretel things which are to come. All these meet in Christ our great Prophet in a singular and eminent manner.

2dly, He is here described by his type; 'a Prophet like unto me,' says Moses; who therein typified and prefigured Christ. But you may say, is it not said of Moses, Deut. 34:10. 'There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.' I answer, It is true indeed of a mere man there never arose so great a prophet in Israel as Moses was, either in respect of his familiarity with God, or of the miracles which he wrought by the efficacy of the divine power. Moses, however, was but a servant, and Christ a Son: Moses was but a star to this Sun, and derived all his light and knowledge from him. All the prophets under the Old Testament, however eminent were but Stars, and borrowed all their light from the Sun of righteousness. Nevertheless there were several things wherein Christ was like to Moses; such as, Moses and Christ were both persecuted in their infancy, Moses was a deliverer from the

temporal, but Christ from the spiritual Egypt, of which the former was a figure. But more particularly, Christ was like to Moses,

(1.) In this great intimacy and familiarity with God. It is said, Exod. 33:11 that 'the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.' He spake with Moses freely, familiarly, and immediately; not by an angel, in a dream or vision, as he did to other prophets. Now Christ was like Moses in this respect, and far excelled him in it; for he was intimate with God from all eternity, Prov. 8:30; he was 'with God,' John 1:1 and lay in his bosom, knowing all his counsels and purposes.

(2.) Christ was like to Moses in the excellency of his ministration, and his great faithfulness in the discharge of it. It is said, Heb. 3:2. 'He was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.' As the office of Moses extended to the whole house of God under the law, and to all the service of it; so did Christ's reach to the whole church of God, and to all the service of it under the gospel. As Moses was appointed of God to give out what he delivered; so was Christ appointed by his Father to institute what he did institute, and abrogate what he did abrogate. As Moses was faithful to him that appointed him in all the matters of God's house, keeping back nothing that he was commanded to reveal; so was Christ faithful to the Father, who did appoint him in like manner; yea, Christ far excelled Moses, as the apostle shews, Heb. 3:3, 4. 'For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, in as much as he who hath builded the house, hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.'

(3.) Moses was a prophet that mediated between God and the people. He carried God's mind to them, and returned their mind to God, because they were not able to hear the voice of God immediately themselves, Deut. 18:16, 17. So Christ is a Mediator between God and man; he deals with God for man, and with man for God.

(4.) As Moses confirmed his doctrine by many miracles which he wrought in the presence of the people to their full conviction; so our great Prophet is like unto Moses in this also: for he wrought many mighty miracles in the view and face of the world, which could not be denied, and thereby confirmed the doctrine which he preached, and verified the divinity of his person and mission.

3dly, Christ is here described by his stock and lineage from which he sprung according to the flesh, 'A Prophet shall the Lord raise up of your brethren; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came,' says the apostle, Rom. 9:5. He was an Israelite: and it is evident that he sprang from the tribe of Judah, Heb. 7:14. He put great honour and dignity upon that people and nation by his nativity and descent from them.

2. There is a strict injunction given of obedience to this Prophet: 'Him shall ye hear in all things.' By hearing, in this place, we are to understand obedience: and this obedience is required to be given to this Prophet only, universally, and under great penalties. (1.) It is required to be given to him only; for so him in the text must be understood as exclusive of all others. It is true, we are commanded to obey the voice of his messengers and ministers, Heb. 13:17 but still it is Christ speaking by them to whom we are to pay our obedience. 'He that heareth you (says he), heareth me.' We are to obey them 'in the Lord,' i. e. commanding and forbidding in Christ's name and authority. (2.) This obedience must be given to him universally: 'Him shall ye hear in all things.' Whatever he enjoins must presently be complied with; his commands are to be obeyed, not disputed. It is true, a judgment of discretion is allowed to Christians, to judge whether it be the will of God or not. We must 'prove what is the holy, good, and acceptable will of the Lord,' Rom. 12:2. And whenever his will is understood and known, we have no liberty to chuse, but must conform ourselves to it, be the duty commanded ever so difficult, or the sin forbidden ever so pleasing and tempting. (3.) This obedience is required under a very severe penalty, even no less than being cut off and destroyed from among the people, and of God's requiring it at

our hands, Deut. 18:19. Acts 3:22. 'I will require it of him;' i. e. revenge myself in the destruction of the disobedient. This obligation laid on men to obey the great Prophet, is not a prediction, more than the commands, 'Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery,' &c.

The doctrine natively arising from the text is,

DOCT. 'Christ is a Prophet, and, as the Redeemer of his people, executes that office, in revealing to them, by his word and Spirit, the will of God for their salvation.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What is implied in Christ's revealing the will of God for our salvation.

II. What is that will of God that Christ reveals.

III. How he reveals this will of God.

IV. For what ends he reveals the will of God, and the necessity of this revelation in order to our salvation.

V. Lastly, Make some improvement.

1. I am to shew what is implied in Christ's revealing the will of God for our salvation, wherein Christ's prophetic work lies. It implies,

1. That as it is God's determined will and purpose that some of mankind shall be saved, so he has laid down a certain way and method for their salvation, out of which none can be saved, and in which all that take it shall be saved.

2. That the discovery of this method of salvation was a secret of God that man could never have found out, John 1:8. It was a counsel in

the breast of God, which, for man or angel, might for ever have lain hid.

3. That our Lord Jesus was intimately acquainted with this will of God, John 1:18. He was 'in the bosom of the Father.' He was privy to his eternal counsels, as being the eternal Son of God. And therefore he needed not be carried to heaven, to hear and learn from God what he was to teach ere he began to preach to the world, being 'God manifested in the flesh,' 1 Tim. 3:16. Neither did he ascend unto heaven oftener than once, and that only after he had suffered, Heb. 9:12.

4. That unto Jesus Christ we owe the discovery and revelation of the divine will. He is the fountain of all that light which points out the way to salvation, Isa. 55:4. 'I have given him, (says the Lord), for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.' He is that true pillar of cloud that guides to the heavenly Canaan; and no beams of saving light shine on the world but from him, John 3:13 and in the face of Jesus, 2 Cor. 4:6.

II. I proceed to shew what is that will of God that Christ as a Prophet reveals. It is the will of God for the salvation of sinners, and that the whole will of God in all things concerning their edification and salvation. It is 'the word of his grace which is able to build them up,' Acts 20:32. It is 'written, that ye might believe,—and that believing ye might have life.'

This may be reduced to two heads.

1. Faith. Man was broken off from God and his favour and fellowship. 'It was the will of God, that man should come and be reunited to him in the way of believing in a slain Redeemer. This Christ has revealed in the gospel. Therein he has laid open the mystery of reconciliation, as laid down betwixt the Father and him from eternity, in all the parts thereof, and this by his word and Spirit to teach his own children.

2. Obedience. Man, as he could not, so he knew not how to serve acceptably. Christ has also fully discovered that point. And therefore we find him at his prophetic work, expounding the law, and vindicating it from the false glosses of the Pharisees, Matth. 5:6, 7 and every where not only shewing men what to do, but how to do it.

More particularly, as the will of God denotes all that God would have us to know, believe, and do, in order to our salvation; and as there are some things to be known as the foundation of our faith, some things to be believed, and some things to be done in point of duty, as the fruits and effects of true saving faith; so these particulars being the objects of Christ's teaching, I shall mention a few of them very briefly.

1. Christ makes known to us our original state, that holy and happy condition in which man was made; of which I gave you a specimen in the discourse concerning the creation of man. Man was then a holy and happy creature, the peculiar favourite of heaven, and endued with choicer prerogatives than all the creatures in this lower world. It is necessary for us to know this, that we may not accuse God of that sin and disorder which now prevails in our constitution, and renders us objects of the divine abhorrence; and may be unwearied till we regain our forfeited felicity. This is a matter of pure revelation, and is accordingly taught us in the inspired volume.

2. Christ reveals to us our misery and wretchedness by the fall. This I also endeavoured to open up to you in the course of this work. Man, by sin, lost communion with God, fell under his wrath and curse, and is liable to temporal and eternal miseries. This miserable state, though also a matter of revelation, is well known to all the descendants of Adam, so that they feel it in their sad experience, and they have no need to be taught it. But Christ teaches his people this doctrine in a manner that the rest of the world are strangers to. And therefore,

3. Christ reveals to us our woful impotency and inability to help ourselves. This is the fatal consequence of the fall, and has been partly mentioned in the foregoing part of this work. 'O Israel, (says the Lord), thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help,' Hos. 13:9 which says, that though our ruin is of us, our help is not in us. Hence men in their natural state are said to be without strength, incapable to deliver themselves from the wretched state into which they are plunged by sin. Man is so deeply sunk in the horrible pit, that it passes the skill and ability of men or angels to pull him out. He cannot atone offended justice, or expiate his sin. This deplorable state of man is revealed in scripture, and savingly only to the elect, by the Saviour of sinners.

4. Christ reveals as a Prophet, that there is a way found out, and a method laid down in the adorable depths of divine wisdom, whereby poor sinners may be delivered from sin and wrath, and obtain eternal salvation. For this discovery we are indebted to divine revelation. Of this I have spoken under the covenant of grace. And Christ, as a Prophet, teaches this article to his people so efficaciously, that they acquiesce in this method of salvation.

5. He reveals to us that he is a full and sufficient Saviour, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, Heb. 7:25. So that his own people cordially embrace him as their only Saviour, and accept him as their sole Redeemer, looking for expiation of guilt, pardon of sin, and peace with God, only from and through him.

6. He teaches, that we must have union with him through faith, or else we can have no benefit by his blood, 1 John 5:12. 'He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life:' that is, he that is united to Christ is spiritually alive, and shall not come into condemnation; but he that is not united to him is still under the curse, and the wrath of God abideth on him. It is by being in Christ, united to him, that we escape condemnation, Rom. 8:1.

7. Christ teaches us, that we must believe in, and receive him as our only Saviour and Redeemer, resting upon him alone for life and salvation. Hence it is said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

8. Another part of the will of God that Christ reveals to us is our sanctification; and we are told, that 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Holiness of heart and life is absolutely to qualify men for the enjoyment of God in heaven, as no unclean thing can enter the celestial abode.

III. I come now to shew how Christ reveals this will of God for salvation, namely, by his word and Spirit, jointly or together; for both are absolutely necessary for attaining that end.

First, Christ reveals this by his word. This is the external revelation of it, without the knowledge of which no man can be saved. The personal Word of God teaches us by his word written or preached, or extraordinarily revealed. So there are three ways of Christ's teaching by his word.

1. The word extraordinarily revealed, as appears from Heb. 1:1 and Gen. 3:15 which method having long ago ceased, we need not enlarge upon it.

2. By the word preached; which has been managed two ways, wherein the kindness of the Divine Teacher appears,

(1.) By his own personal preaching, Heb. 1:1 in the days of his flesh, when he went about the work of preaching the gospel to the Jews, for which cause he is called 'the minister of the circumcision,' Rom. 15:8 putting a glory on the ministerial calling, by himself performing that office. He spake as never man spake. An heavenly authority and majesty appeared in his preaching, which attracted the attention of his hearers, and forced them to acknowledge that he was more than a human being.

(2.) By his ambassadors in his name. So he exercised his prophetic office.

[1.] Before his incarnation, under the Old Testament, 1 Pet. 3:19 instructing his church sometimes by extraordinary teachers, the prophets; sometimes by ordinary teachers, or both. And this he did both before and after the word was written: for although before the scripture the church was supplied by extraordinary revelation, yet all were not so taught, but many were trained up by the external teaching of the patriarchs; as appears from Abraham's practice, Gen. 18:17, 19.

[2.] After his incarnation, by the apostles, who are infallibly guided, and to this day by ordinary ministers, by whom Christ still exercises his prophetic office, Eph. 4:11 and so he promised to be with them, Mat. 28 ult. In this respect they have that awful hedge set about them, 'He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.' On this ground he obligeth people to repair to them for clearing, from the word, the matters of salvation, sin, and duty to them, Mal. 2:7. 'They should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.'

3. By the word written, John 20:31. 'These things are written, that ye might believe,' &c. Thereby it is that the prophets and apostles, and all the inspired writers, being dead, yet speak to us, and Christ by them, to shew us the will of God for our salvation. Thus was the church taught from the days of Moses, and in this manner it is taught to this day. We need not say, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' or 'who shall descend into the depths?' that is, for the revelation of the method of salvation. The word is nigh to us, it is among our hands. To that, Christ sends us to know his mind, Isa. 8:20. 'To the law and to the testimony; yet not to jostle out men's teaching from it, Eph. 4:11, 12.

Yet the word itself is not sufficient to teach us the will of God for our salvation. Not the word preached; for even most of those who heard

him that spake as never man spake, were not bettered by his preaching; as appears from John 12:37, 38. 'But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, 'Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?' Nor yet the word written, for the same reason; nor that extraordinarily revealed, as in the case of Balaam. See 1 Cor. 2:14. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' There is a darkness over the minds of men which nothing but omnipotency can remove. Therefore,

Secondly, Christ teaches his elect, who are taught to salvation by his Spirit, who joins internal illumination to external revelation. 'He opened the understandings' of the two disciples who were going to Emmaus, 'that they might understand the scriptures,' Luke 24:45. Thus all the elect are taught of God, and so come to Christ; and thus have they always been taught. Ye must not, however, understand these as two different ways of Christ's teaching to salvation, in those that are capable of both; for the word is that by which the Spirit teacheth still. These God has joined, Isa. 59:21. 'As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.' John 16:13, 14. 'When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.' Thus the teaching of the elect is begun, and thus it continues to the end.

Indeed the word hath a mighty power and efficacy upon the hearts of men. It enlightens their mind, awakens their consciences, convinces of sin, and can effectually convert and change them. But this is only

when it is managed by the Spirit's hand. All its power and efficacy is from him. The virtue of the word is not from itself: it doth not work in a physical way, as natural agents do, for then the effect would naturally follow, unless it were miraculously hindered. But this spiritual efficacy is in the word, as the healing virtue was in the pool of Bethesda, of which it is said, John 5:4. 'An angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.' This efficacious power is not naturally inherent in the word at all times but only communicated to it at some special seasons. Many times the word is purely and plainly preached, but no gracious effect follows. It proves but like the beating of the air, which makes no impression upon it: none are awakened, convinced, or converted by it. Neither is the power of the word communicated to it by the instrument that manageth it: for saith the apostle, 1 Cor. 3:7. Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.' Ministers are nothing, they have no power or strength of their own sufficient for such a purpose as this is. The apostle doth not mean here, that they are useless instruments, and altogether unnecessary, but that they are insufficient of themselves, to produce such mighty effects. It worketh not as it is the word of man, but as it is the word of God. Ministers may say of the ordinary, as Peter said of the extraordinary effects of the Spirit, Acts 3:12. 'Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk!' All the power and efficacy of the word is derived from the Spirit of the Lord. It is said, 1 Thess. 2:13. 'When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.' When the word of God is set home by the Spirit, then it is mighty to enlighten the minds, convince the consciences, and humble and break the hearts of sinners. Then it proves as a hammer to break the rock in pieces. And it is said, John 16:8. 'When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.' The word made use of there signifies conviction by such clear demonstration as compelleth

assent. It not only convinceth men in general that they are sinners, but it convinceth them particularly of their own sins, and of all the heinous aggravations of them. It sets sin before the eye of conscience in all its aggravating circumstances and fearful consequences, as committed against the holy and righteous law of God, clear light, regrets and checks of conscience, manifold mercies and favours, God's long suffering, Christ's precious blood, many warnings of judgments, the reward and wages whereof, by the verdict of a man's own conscience, is death, even eternal death and damnation.

It may not be improper here to touch at the excellency of Christ's teaching, and shew you that it far transcends the teaching of all others.

1. He teacheth plainly and perspicuously. When he was upon earth, and preached the gospel unto men, he taught them by parables and similitudes, he clothed sublime and spiritual mysteries with earthly metaphors, and thereby adapted them to the low and dull capacities of men, and spake so familiarly about them, as if he had been speaking earthly things. And, according to his own example, he would have his ministers to preach, 'using great plainness of speech,' as the apostle Paul tells us he did, 2 Cor. 3:12 and 'by manifestation of the truth, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God,' 2 Cor. 4:2. Yet he does not allow them to be rude and careless in their expressions, pouring out rude, indigested, mean, sordid, and methodical words, nauseous and ungrateful to the ears of men. No; a holy, serious, and grave expression suits the lips of Christ's ambassadors. And what man ever spake more weightily, logically, and persuasively, than the apostle Paul, by whose pen Christ hath admonished us to beware of vain ostentation, and swelling words of vanity; but he would have us stoop to the understanding of the meanest, and not to give the people a comment darker than the text. He would have us rather to prick their consciences than tickle their fancies, and break their hearts rather than please their ears. Christ was a very plain preacher, and he not only opened truths to the understanding, but opened the

understanding also to perceive them. He takes away the vail from the heart, and causes a heavenly light to shine into the soul, and darts a clear beam from heaven into the mind. Christ's teachings are fully satisfying. The soul doubts no more, staggers or hesitates no more; but fully acquiesces in what Christ teaches. It is so well satisfied therewith, that it can venture all upon the truth of what it hath learned from him.' You may see what is said with respect to this, Prov. 8:8, 9. 'All the words of my mouth are in righteousness, there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.'

2. Christ teaches fully. He gives us a full and clear revelation of the will of God with respect to all things which concern our happiness, either in this life or in that which is to come. That is spoken of Christ which we have, Psal. 40:9, 10. 'I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving kindness, and thy truth from the great congregation.' He hath given us a perfect rule of faith and obedience, in nothing defective or superfluous, but comprehending the whole duty of man. The scriptures contain the counsels of God, which he hath graciously sent to redress the miseries of the fall; and therefore it is said by the apostle, Acts 20:27. 'I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.' He hath kept nothing back from men that was needful to be known in order to their salvation. Hence saith he, John 15:15. 'All things that I have heard of my father I have made known unto you.' And it is said, 2 Tim. 3:15 that 'the holy scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation.' Christ hath plainly shewed us what course we are to take, that so we may obtain the friendship and favour of God here, and come to the enjoyment of him for ever hereafter. You may see what David says, Psal. 119:97. 'O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.' Christ by his word gives us a full discovery of our duty in every state and condition that we can be in while here in the world; and our relative duties are fully revealed. See what is said by the apostle, Tit. 2:11, 12. 'For the grace of God that

bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.'

3. Christ teaches the will of God purely. His doctrine has not the least dash of error mixed with it to allay and debase it. His malicious enemies, who were continually lying at the catch, and most observant of his words and actions, could find nothing to charge him with. He preached the gospel most purely unto men. He is the true and faithful witness, Rev. 1:5. And he hath commanded his ministers to preserve the simplicity and purity of the gospel, and not to mix and sophisticate it. Hence it is said, 2 Cor. 4:2. 'We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.' And says Paul, 2 Cor. 2:17. 'We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.' Here the apostle vindicates himself from the practice of false apostles and corrupt teachers, who adulterated the word, and mingled their own errors and inventions with it, and studied to please men more than God, to advance their own temporal interests thereby, more than the salvation and eternal interests of men's souls.

4. He teaches the mind of God in a most sweet and affectionate manner. His words make men's hearts to glow and burn within them, as it was with the two disciples going to Emmaus, Luke 24:32. It was prophesied concerning him of old, that 'he should not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street,' Isa. 42:2. 'The Lord hath given him the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.' Isa. 50:4. How sweetly did his words slide into the hearts of his hearers? He drew them with the bands of love, and with the cords of a man. See how affectionately he speaks, Matth. 11:28. 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.' He discouraged none, nor upbraided any from coming to him. He assured them, that

all who were willing to come should be heartily welcome, and meet with a gracious reception. His great familiarity and free condescension to the most vile and despicable sinners were often made the matter of his reproach. Such is his gentle and sweet carriage towards his people, that the church is called the Lamb's wife, Rev. 19:7.

5. He teaches the will of God powerfully. It was observed by the multitudes that flocked about him, that he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes, Matth. 7:29. They were but dull and coldrife preachers; their words did freeze as it were between their lips: but Christ spoke with a divine efficacy and power. There was heat as well as light in his doctrine. And so is there still, though it be declared by the mouths of poor, weak, and despised men. Hence says the apostle, 2 Cor. 10:4. 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds,' &c. It is still 'quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart,' Heb. 4:14. The holy apostle imitated his great master Christ: being filled with his Spirit, he spake freely and home to the hearts of men. His words made the consciences of sinners to shake and tremble in their breasts. It is true, all faithful and able ministers are not alike gifted in this particular; but yet there is a holy seriousness, a spiritual grace and majesty in their doctrine, commanding reverence and regard from their hearers.

6. Christ teaches the will of God infallibly. The wisest and best of men may mistake, and lead others into the same mistakes with themselves: but it is not so in the teachings of Christ; for they are not subject to error and mistake. His Spirit guideth men into all truth, and into nothing but the truth, John 16:13. He is an unerring guide, and a shepherd that will not suffer his sheep to stray and wander to their eternal destruction upon the mountains of sin and vanity. All who are taught of Christ shall certainly arrive at celestial glory: for he hath said, John 10:28. 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall

never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.' His word is abundantly sufficient to make men wise unto salvation. And saith the apostle, Gal. 6:16. 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.'

7. The teachings of Christ are abiding teachings. They make deep and indelible impressions upon the soul, which can never wear out. The words of men evanish like smoke, and fly away: but the words of Christ stick close by us. What he teacheth he writeth upon the heart. So it is promised, Jer. 31:33. 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.' It is usual with gracious souls, whose understandings have been savingly opened by the Lord, to say many times afterwards, I shall never forget such a scripture that once convinced me, and such a promise that once encouraged and comforted me. To this purpose it is said by David, Psalm. 119:93. 'I will never forget thy precepts; for with them thou hast quickened me.'

8. Christ teaches men the will of God in a saving manner. They are all made wise to salvation who are taught by him. See what the apostle Paul says of the holy scriptures, which contain this divine revelation, 2 Tim. 3:15, 16. 'The holy scriptures are able to make one wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' There is a great deal of other knowledge that goes to hell with men. The pavement of that infernal furnace, as one speaks, is pitched with the skulls of many great scholars. Many who have learned heads, have graceless hearts. But life eternal lies in the teaching of Christ. Hence says our Saviour, John 17:3. 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' This is deservedly called 'the light of life,' John 8:12. And 'in this light' men 'clearly see light,' Psal. 36:9.

You see then, from what hath been said on this head, that Christ's teachings far transcend the teachings of all others; so that it may be

justly said of him, as was said by his hearers of old, 'Never man spake like this man.'

IV. I now proceed to shew for what ends Christ as a Prophet reveals the will of God; where I shall touch at the necessity of this revelation in order to salvation.

The end of this revelation is for our salvation. Man by nature is ignorant of true happiness, and of the way that leads to it. But 'the grace of God, that bringeth salvation.' i. e. the glorious gospel of Christ, 'hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' The great design of the gospel-revelation is to shew what course we must steer that so we may escape deserved wrath and misery, and arrive at everlasting happiness and glory. So that now we need not cry out like those of old, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' Micah 6:6, 7.

But here it may be inquired, Is not the light of nature sufficient to inform us of the way of salvation?

To this I answer in the negative. This revelation of the will of God which we have by Christ, was needful to be superadded to that, by reason of our natural darkness and blindness of mind. Men by nature know not God; their understandings are darkened through the ignorance that is in them. The whole world is involved in darkness. Though the light of nature tells us that there is a God, and that it is our duty to worship and serve him, yet it cannot teach us how we are to do it, so as to be accepted of him; as is clear in the case of the heathens, of whom it is said, Rom. 1:23. 'They changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man,

and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.' They debased the adorable Deity, by entertaining unworthy conceptions of him, and performing such acts of worship to him, as were not fit for a rational nature to offer, nor for the holy and glorious Majesty of heaven to receive. Besides, they ascribed his honour and attributes to the creatures; not only to the sun, moon, and stars, and to invisible powers which they supposed governed and ruled these shining luminaries, but even to the most despicable things in nature. Birds, and beasts, and creeping things, were the objects of their adoration. Again, though the light of nature directs us to many excellent moral duties, as to honour our parents, to do to others as we would have them to deal with us, &c. yet it cannot teach us to perform these duties in an acceptable manner. The apostle tells us, that 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.' The mind of man by nature hath not only a native blindness, by reason of which it cannot discern the things of the Spirit, but also a natural enmity that it hates the light; so that till the mind be healed and enlightened by Christ, the natural faculty can no more discern the things of the Spirit, than the sensitive faculty can discern the things of reason. It is as easy for men to read the law in tables of stone, after they are pounded and crumbled to dust, as to read true notions in lapsed and corrupt nature. This is excellently described by the apostle Paul, Eph. 4:17, 18. 'This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.' Here he terms it 'vanity of mind, darkness in the understanding, and blindness of heart.' All the essential faculties of the rational soul are entirely corrupted; the mind which is the repository of principles, that noble faculty, whereby we judge of things good and evil; the understanding, that discursive faculty, whereby we collect one thing from another, framing conclusions from the principles of the mind, and reducing these principles into practical dictates; and the heart, i. e. the will, conscience, and affections, which were to apply these principles, and draw out these reasonings on the stage of life; all are corrupted. And the most

ingenious nations for natural knowledge and civil prudence verify the apostle's character in their brutish actions. The Egyptians, who were men famous for wisdom and learning, and propagated the sciences to the other parts of the world, were worse than beasts in their worship. The Greeks, who counted their Athens the eye of the world, were not more refined, when they adored thirty thousand gods, and some of them infamous for murder and adultery, and held three hundred and twenty-four different opinions about the chief good, as learned men tell us. And the Romans, though eminent for civil prudence, were not much behind them, when they worshipped a fever, and dignified a strumpet with the title of the Goddess of Flowers. And a great philosopher among them takes notice of their ignorance of God in the various notions which they have of him. Even those among the heathens who for acts of justice and temperance might justly put many men under the gospel to the blush, have had a thick darkness upon their minds in regard of God. But here more particularly I shall shew you several things absolutely necessary to be known in order to salvation, wherein the light of nature is very defective.—As,

1. The fall of man, which is the first cause and original spring of all our misery and woe. This is what the human understanding could never find out by its most accurate search and inquiries. For though the heathen philosophers were abundantly sensible of many confusions and disorders in their souls, and of their woful subjection to the rage and tyranny of unruly passions, yet they could never find out the fatal cause, nor trace those streams to the true original. They found indeed that something was amiss, and much amiss too; but from whence this disorder did arise, nature itself is wholly ignorant, and hath not so much as a regular guess without revelation. And though Plato seems to have had some dark notices of man's original and fallen state, when he expresses the one under the symbolic image of the golden age under Saturn's reign, and the other by the miserable iron image under the reign of Jupiter, in which he lived; yet we may warrantably conclude, that he had these discoveries from the scriptures of Jewish tradition. Origin is of opinion, that Plato

understood the history of man's fall by his conversation with the Jews in Egypt. This first cause of all our misery is only made known by the scriptures. Men by nature know not the fall of Adam, which is the source and bitter root from which all their woe and trouble springs. And the light of nature is too dim and weak-sighted to pierce into the depths of Iniquity. It cannot acquaint us with the fumes of sin, and with that inward strength and power of it, which gives birth and nourishment to all those irregular actions which flow from it. There was therefore a necessity of some other light to penetrate the clouds of nature, and search into the depths of the belly, and bring to view that habitual disconformity of our natures to that rectitude required of us, and which was once possessed by us.

2. The light of nature cannot acquaint us with the true and adequate object of our religious worship, namely a Trinity of persons in the glorious Godhead. This sacred doctrine is wholly supernatural, and entirely beyond the reach of the human understanding. The most illuminated Philosophers that ever were in the world, though they found out the causes of many things, and could discourse to excellent purpose concerning the magnitude, motions, and influences of the stars, and the nature of plants and minerals, and many other things which are veiled from vulgar minds, yet they could never by their most accurate search and enquiry find out the mystery of the Trinity. This grand article of the Christian faith was altogether hid and unknown to them. We find indeed that some of the ancient philosophers had some dark and imperfect traditions concerning the Trinity. Hence some think, that that great Oriental maxim which Pythagoras brought with him into Greece, touching God, viz. that he was hen kai polu, that is, one and many, was but some broken Jewish tradition of the Trinity. And the Platonists had also some weak and corrupt traditions of three hypostases, or persons, which they called Trinity. But these and the like poor notices of the Trinity, it is most probable, Pythagoras first, and Plato after him, derived originally from the Jews, if not immediately, yet mediately by the Phœnicians and Egyptians. But yet neither the Grecian, Egyptian, nor Phœnician philosophers, had any sound and true notion of this great mystery; as

will appear clear and evident to any sober mind, that considers what a world of fables and contradictions they mixed with those broken discoveries which they had received concerning it. Plato himself ingenuously confesses this, when he said, that he had received many mysteries from the ancients which he did not understand, but expected some interpreter to unfold them unto him. But we find the gospel sets this mystery in a clear light. See Mat. 3:16, 17. 1 John 5:7. 2 Cor. 13:14 all of which, and other scriptures, were considered when I discoursed on the doctrine of the Trinity. The gospel gives us a clear discovery of the persons in the Godhead, as to their nature and operations, and their combined and distinct acts and expressions of goodness. We find they all concur in the work of man's redemption: the Father contrived it, the Son purchased it, and the Holy Ghost applies it.

3. The light of nature cannot inform us of the way and method of our recovery by Christ. The whole scheme of this amazing work of redemption, was without the compass of our most searching faculties. There are three things with respect to this, which I shall touch at a little; and we had never known any of them unless they had been revealed. As,

(1.) The mystery of eternal election. From all eternity God foresaw that man should fall, and thereby plunge himself into an abyss of sin and misery, and that it would not be possible to recover himself out of it, neither could he receive help from any creature in heaven or earth; and God not intending that the whole race of man should perish, and become the eternal trophies of hell, set apart a certain number in his eternal purpose and decree, whom he designed to make vessels of mercy, and bring to the fruition of endless, glory, to the everlasting praise of the invincible efficacy of his sovereign grace and rich mercy in Christ. So the apostle teaches us, Eph. 1:4, 5, 6 upon which passage I formerly discoursed in the course of this work. This is indeed a profound mystery, which could never have been discovered by the clearest sighted reason: but the great Prophet of the church hath revealed it unto us.

(2.) We had never known the astonishing method of redemption, by which the elect are brought into a state of salvation, unless it had been revealed: How that God from all eternity entered into a covenant with his own Son, promising him assistance, a numerous seed, and great dignity and glory, if he would undertake the work of redemption, and free the elect from sin and wrath; whereupon Christ cheerfully condescended, and engaged to become the Sinner's Surety, to pay the debt: he was content to stand in his people's room, and submit himself to the avenging strokes of justice: he was willing to become a curse, that they might receive a blessing; to become poor, that they might be made rich; to be accused and condemned, that they might be justified; and to endure the shock of his Father's wrath, that they might go free. Hence he is brought in by the Psalmist offering himself as Surety in their stead, Psal. 40:6, 7. 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me.' He willingly yielded to all the conditions which were required for the accomplishment of that great and difficult work. He was content to take a body, that he might be capable to suffer. The debt could not be paid, nor the articles of the covenant performed, but in the human nature. He was therefore to have a nature capable of and prepared for sufferings. Hence it is said, Heb. 10:5. 'A body hast thou prepared me.' He behoved to have a body to suffer that which was represented by those legal sacrifices wherein God took no pleasure. And he took a body of flesh, surrounded with all the infirmities of our fallen nature, sin only excepted. The incarnation of Christ is a great mystery, which could never have entered into the thoughts either of angels or men, unless it had been brought to light by the gospel. Hence says the apostle, 1 Tim. 3:16. 'Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh,' &c. But of this I spoke at large when treating of the incarnation of our Redeemer.

(3.) The light of nature could never tell us, that it is by faith in Christ that we must be saved. '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. He is set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. It is only through faith in Christ that the elect can be saved. All that believe in him are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. We are commanded to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall have everlasting life. Now, this way of salvation is above the strain and reach of natural reason to attain to the knowledge of it. There are some seminal sparks of the law in the hearts of men by nature; some common principles of piety, justice, and charity, without which the world would soon disband, and fall into confusion. But there is not the least conjecture of the contrivance of the gospel. It could never have entered into the thoughts of the Israelites, that by looking to a brazen serpent erected on a pole, the wounds should be healed which they received by the bitings of the fiery serpents. And as little could guilty man find out a way to satisfy divine justice by the death and sufferings of a Mediator, and to heal the wounded spirit by believing on Christ crucified. The most active and inquiring reason could never have thought of the wonders of the incarnation, and that a virgin should conceive, and a God be born. Nor could it have dreamed of the death and sufferings of the Prince of life, and of the resurrection and ascension of the Lord of glory. Now, the human understanding, as bright and clear as it is corrupt, yet it could not, by all the help of argumentation and reasoning, arrive at the knowledge of it. Supernatural revelation was absolutely necessary to discover it to the holy angels. The apostle tells us, Eph. 3:10. 'Unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, is made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' This was a mystery locked up in the breast of God, of which the angels seem to have had no thoughts, till the revelation of it was made to the church. And even since that discovery, these wise and intelligent beings have not a perfect knowledge of the whole of the gospel-state; for they are still making further enquiries: 'Which things,' says the apostle, 'the angels desire to look into,' 1 Pet. 1:12.

4. The light of nature does not inform men of the evil there is in the first inclinations to sin. The heathen philosophers allowed the

disorder of the sensitive appetite to be innocent and harmless, till it pass to the supreme part of the soul, and induces it to deliberate or resolve upon moral actions. For they were ignorant of that original and intimate pollution that cleaves to human nature. And because our faculties are natural, they thought that the first motions to forbidden objects were natural desires, and not the irregularities of lust. Accordingly all their precepts reach no further than the counsels of the heart; but the desires and motions of the lower faculties, though very culpable, are left by them indifferent. So that it is quite evident, that there are many stains and defilements in their purgative virtues. The law of God requires holiness and purity in all the habits and dispositions of the soul, an entire conformity to the will of God in all its various motions and actings; or else we can never be happy: for the scripture tells us, that he must have clean hands and a pure heart, that would ascend into the hill of God, and stand in his holy place; and that it is only the pure in heart that shall see God.

5. The light of nature and philosophy, improved to the highest height, is very defective in respect of piety, and in many things contrary to it; as will appear from the following particulars.

(1.) By delivering unworthy notions and conceptions of the Deity. Not only the vulgar heathens changed the truth of God into a lie, when they measured his immense and incomprehensible perfections by the narrow compass of their shallow imaginations: but the most renowned philosophers among them highly dishonoured God by their base and unbecoming apprehensions of him. For the true notion of God signifies a being infinite, independent, the universal Creator and powerful Preserver of heaven and earth, and the absolute Director of all events; that his providence superintends and takes notice of all the motions and actions of his creatures; and that he is a liberal rewarder of those that seek him, and a just revenger of those that violate his holy and righteous laws. Now, all this was contradicted by some of them. Some asserted the world to be eternal, and others that matter was so, and in that denied him to be the first cause of all things. Some limited his being, confining him to one of

the poles of heaven? others extended it only to, the amplitude of the world. The Epicureans totally denied his governing providence, and made him an idle spectator of things here below. They maintained and asserted, that God was contented with his own majesty and glory; and that whatever was without him, was neither in his thoughts nor care; as if to be employed in the various accidents of the world were inconsistent with his own felicity. Thus, by confining his power who is infinite, they denied him in confessing him. There were others who allowed him to regard the great affairs of kingdoms and nations, and to manage crowns, and sceptres, and matters of state: but to stoop so low as to regard particular things, they judged to be as unbecoming the divine nature, as for the sun to descend from the firmament to light a candle for a servant in the dark. They took the sceptre out of God's hand, and set up a foolish and blind power to dispose of all mutable things. Some again made him a servant to nature, that he necessarily turned the spheres. Others subjected him to an invincible destiny, that he could not do what he desired. And thus the wisest of the heathens dishonoured the Deity by their false imaginations of him; and, instead of representing him with his proper attributes, drew a picture of themselves.

(2.) Philosophy and Nature's light is very defective as to piety, in not injoining the love of God. The first and great command of the law is this, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and strength.' Yet these philosophers speak little or nothing of this, which is the principal part of natural religion. Aristotle, for as clear-sighted as he was in other things, yet when he discourses of God, is not only affectedly obscure to conceal his ignorance, but even in his morals, where he had reason to consider the Deity as an object most worthy of our love and obedience in an infinite degree, he totally omits such a representation of him, though the love of God is that alone which gives value and price to all other virtues. And this is the reason why philosophy is so defective as to rules for preparing men for an intimate and delightful communion with God, which is the effect of holy and perfect love, and the supreme happiness of the reasonable nature. And if, in the Platonic philosophy there are some things

directing to this, yet they are but coldly expressed, and so dark and obscure, that, like inscriptions on ancient medals or marbles which are defaced, they are hardly legible. It is the singular character of the gospel, which distinguishes it from all human institutions, that it represents the infinite amiableness of God and his beauty and goodness to us, to excite and draw out our affections to him in a superlative manner. It commands us to follow him as dear children, and presses us to seek for those gracious dispositions which may qualify us for the enjoyment of him in a way of friendship and love.

(3.) The best philosophers laid down this servile and pernicious maxim, That a wise man should always conform to the religion of his country. Socrates, who acknowledged one supreme God, yet advised his friends to comply with the common idolatry, without any difference in the outward worship of him and creatures: and those who did otherwise he branded as superstitious and vain. And his own practice was according to this advice which he had given; for he frequented the temples, and assisted at the sacrifices, which he declared before his judges, to purge himself of the crime of which he was accused. And Seneca, speaking of the Heathen worship, acknowledges that it was unreasonable, and only the multitude of fools made it excusable: yet he would have a philosopher to conform to these customs, in obedience to the law, not as pleasing to the gods. Thus they made religion a dependant on the state. They performed the rights of Heathenish superstition, that were either filthy, fantastical, or cruel, such as the devil, the master of these ceremonies, ordained. They became less than men by worshipping the most vile and despicable creatures: and therefore God gave them up to the vilest lusts, carnal impurity being a just punishment of spiritual. Rom. 1:23, 24.

(4.) Philosophy is very defective in not propounding the glory of God as the chief and ultimate end to which all our actions should refer. Now, the philosophers had other views and designs than this, in their precepts and dictates. As,

[1.] To make use of virtue as a means to gain honour and reputation in the world. This was plainly discovered in their books and actions. They were sick of self-love, and did many things to satisfy the eye. They led their lives as in a scene, where one person is within, and another is represented without, by an artificial imitation of what is true. They were swelled with presumption in having little merit, and a great deal of vanity. Now, this respect which men have to the opinion of others, corrupts the intention and vitiates the action. It is not sincere virtue, but a superficial appearance, that is regarded; for it is sufficient to that purpose to seem to be virtuous without being so. And from hence he may discover that many of their most specious actions were but disguised sins; their virtues were as false as their deities. Or,

[2.] The end of philosophy was to prevent the many mischiefs which licentiousness and disorders might bring upon men from without, or to preserve peace and tranquillity within, by suppressing the turbulent passions arising from lust or rage, which trouble and discompose the mind. This was the pretended design of Epicurus, to whom virtue was amiable only as the instrument of pleasure. Or,

[3.] The highest design of philosophy was to propound and expose to view the beauty of virtue, and its charming aspect, as the most worthy motive to draw and influence the affections. Now, supposing that some of the heathens (though very few), by discovering the internal beauty of virtue, were taken with, and had a love to it, and performed some things without any private respect, but for the rectitude of the action, and the inward satisfaction that springs from it; yet they were still defective: for virtue is but a ray of the Deity; and our duty is not complete, unless it be referred to his glory, who is the principle and pattern of it. In short, the great Creator made man for himself: and it is most just and reasonable, that as his favour is our sovereign happiness, so his glory should be our supreme end, without which nothing is regular and truly beautiful.

From all which the necessity of Christ's teaching, and of a divine revelation, clearly appears.

But I must conclude this subject with some improvement.

1. From this doctrine we may infer the continual necessity of a standing ministry. Christ is gone into heaven, and will continue there until the time of the restitution of all things; but by his ministers and ambassadors he daily teaches and instructs us, and for that purpose hath fixed them in the church by a firm and lasting constitution, which shall remain to the end of the world, Matth. 28:16, 20. This is a great and valuable privilege, which we ought highly to prize, and carefully to improve. This alone is sufficient to counterbalance the greatest outward affliction that people can meet with in the world; and therefore we have that promise, Isa. 30:20. 'Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers.'

2. The most rude and ignorant may be taught, seeing Christ executes the office of a Teacher. He can teach the most stupid, and give them an understanding to know the truths of the gospel. Therefore ignorance can be no excuse to gospel-hearers, to whom Christ offers himself as a Teacher. Let the most ignorant among you apply to him, and he will teach you more than the most accomplished philosophers could ever attain by all their improvements of natural light.

3. The weakest Christians need not be discouraged at the dulness and incapacity which they find in themselves: for Christ can easily reveal that to babes which is hid from the wise and prudent: 'The testimonies of the Lord are sure (says the Psalmist), making wise the simple.' Yea, the Lord delights to chuse such as you are, that his grace may appear the more conspicuous in your weakness, 1 Cor. 1:26, 27. Well then, weak but serious Christian, be not discouraged, because you are not so docile and quick in your apprehensions of things as others about you. Many of your neighbours may know more

in other things than you do: but you are not incapable of knowing so much as is necessary to the salvation of your soul, and shall certainly know it, if Christ be your Teacher; and that is sufficient to make you happy for ever. Others indeed may far excel you in the knowledge of other things: but if you know Jesus Christ, and the truth as it is in Jesus, one drop of your knowledge is more valuable and desirable than a whole sea of their natural and political knowledge. One precious truth sucked from the breast of Christ by faith and prayer, is infinitely better than ten thousand dry notions, hewn out by racking and torturing the understanding.

4. Prayer is a proper means for the increase of knowledge. Prayer is the golden key that unlocks that sacred treasure. When Daniel was to expound that secret which was contained in the king's dream, about which the Chaldean magicians had racked their brains to no purpose, you see he addressed God by Prayer, Dan. 2:17, 18 and you see there what success he had, the secret was revealed to him. Luther was wont to say, Three things made a divine, viz. meditation, temptation, and prayer. And a holy man in our neighbouring nation was wont to study upon his knees. And indeed those truths which are got by prayer leave an unusual sweetness upon the heart. In the use of means you should have your eyes towards Christ, and pray that he would open your understandings, and enlighten your minds with saving knowledge. This was David's practice. See Psal. 119:18, 33, 34.

5. Learn from this what entertainment ye are to give to the word. Be not strangers to your Bibles; but read them as Christ's word to you, with reverence, faith, and love. Make, conscience of attending on the preaching of the word, catechising, and the dispensing of the sacraments; and set yourselves to drink up the doctrine of Christ from himself as your Teacher. If people believed that Christ were exercising his prophetic office among them in that way, they would not dare to treat these exercises as they do.

6. See here the abomination of the Quakers and other enthusiasts, who separate the Spirit from the word. To these may be added those

who take up the principles without ground from the word, upon the credit of dreams, visions, voices, and impressions. And much more those who do so upon their own light fancies, without serious examination of them by the word. The practices of all such are an abomination to the Lord; they act in direct opposition to Christ as the great Teacher sent from God; and consequently the light that is in them is darkness.

7. See also the abomination of formalists and legal professors, who know nothing of religion but Do, do. Being unacquainted with a due sense of their own emptiness and darkness in spiritual things, and with the way of making use of Christ as a Prophet, they content themselves with the word without the Spirit, and what they can hammer out of it on their own anvil, so separating the word from the Spirit. And thus they live ignorant of the Spirit's irradiations on the word, and his clearing up scripture-truths to them; which are only had in the way of the soul's going out of itself and its own wisdom to Christ, in a way of believing and depending on him for influences of light and knowledge. This is the neck-break and ruin of many in our day.

8. Wo to them, then, that have the teaching of the word without the Spirit. Ah! do men think nothing to hear so much, and to be illuminated by the Spirit in nothing? Christ may be a Prophet to others, but he cannot be one to such. Let them seriously consider that awful passage, 2 Cor. 4:3, 4. 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

9. Receive Christ as a Prophet, and learn to make use of him daily as such. Renounce your own wit and wisdom, and receive instruction from the mouth of this divine Teacher, who teaches to profit. Be of a docile disposition, willing and inclined to be taught of God: for the meek will he teach his way. And, for the Lord's sake, refuse not to hearken to the voice of this great Prophet, otherwise it will be your

ruin. Consider the awful certification in the 23d verse of the chapter where our text lies, 'And it shall come to pass, that every soul that will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.' Hear him, then, and 'beware lest that come upon you which is spoken in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish,' Acts 13:40, 41.

10. Lastly, Would you know if ye be taught of God? I offer you the following marks.

(1.) Christ's teachings are very humbling to the soul. Human knowledge puffeth up; but divine knowledge abaseth and casteth down. It empties a man of all conceit of his own worth, and fills him with low and abasing thoughts of himself. So it was with Job, chap. 42:5, 6. 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' The same light of the Spirit which discovers unto us the glorious greatness and majesty of God, and his other shining perfections, discovers also, at the same time, the vileness, baseness, emptiness and utter unworthiness of man, yea of the best and holiest of men, as in the case of Isaiah, chap. 6:5. 'Wo is me, for I am undone, because 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.' When Paul got a saving sight of Christ, he calls himself the least of all saints, and the chief of sinners. Were you ever deeply humbled before the Lord and made to see your own emptiness and vileness? Those who are puffed up with pride and self-conceit, are strangers to the teaching of Christ.

(2.) The teachings of Christ deeply affect and impress the heart. They fully reach the soul of a sinner, Hos. 2:14. 'I will speak comfortably unto her;' or, as in the original, 'I will speak to her heart.' When Christ sheweth unto men the great evil and danger of sin, he so convinceth and toucheth the soul, that no creature-comforts can yield any pleasure or sweetness, but prove all tasteless and insipid, and have no more pleasure than the white of an egg. And when he

speaks peace to the soul, and intimates the pardon of sin, he so comforts and refreshes it, that no afflictions or pressures, however heavy and uneasy, have any weight or bitterness in them at all. One drop of consolation from heaven sweetens a whole sea of trouble upon earth, and fills the soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Says the Psalmist, Psal. 94:19. 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.'

(3.) The teachings of Christ are sanctifying and renewing: they change and reform the heart, Eph. 4:21, 22, 23. 'If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, Which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.' You see here that holiness and purity is the effect of divine teaching; holiness both external and internal, negative and positive. All the discoveries of God which Christ makes to the soul have an assimilating quality, and change it into his own likeness, 2 Cor. 3:18.

(4.) All Christ's teachings are practical, issuing in cheerful obedience. Idle notions and useless speculations are not learned from Christ. As his creating words, so his teaching words, are always attended with effect. As when he said, 'Let there be light, and there was light;' so when he says to a soul, Be thou humbled, it is effectually humbled; as in the case of Job, chap. 40:4, 5. 'Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer: yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.' And when he says, Be thou comforted, comfort immediately follows, Isa. 66:13. 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you: and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.'

(5.) Christ's teachings are always agreeable to the written word. The Spirit of Christ and the word of Christ never disagree, as John 14:26. 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.' When he speaks to

the heart of a sinner, whether in a way of conviction, instruction, or consolation, he either makes use of the express words of scripture, or speaks to the heart in a language every way agreeable thereunto. So that the written word becomes the standard and touchstone to weigh and try all doctrines by, Isa. 8:20. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' Whatever differs from the scriptures of truth, must not pass for an inspiration of God, but is a deluding sophism and insinuation of the devil.

(6.) You will have a great love to your teacher, and will be in case to say with David, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee,' Psal. 73:25.

OF CHRIST'S PRIESTLY OFFICE

HEBREWS 7:17.—Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

IT is evident from the context, that the apostle is speaking of Christ as a Priest, applying to him this passage taken from Psal. 110:4. Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec. Where two things are proposed; 1. That he is indeed a Priest, whose business it is to offer sacrifices. 2. That he is so after the order of Melchisedec; noting thereby the similitude betwixt the two, the one being a notable type of the other. This likeness consists not in an unbloody sacrifice, that of bread and wine, which Melchisedec brought forth to Abraham when he returned from the slaughter of the kings who had taken Sodom and Gomorrah; but, (1.) In the name, Christ being the true 'King of righteousness,' and 'King of peace,' in which respect Melchisedec was only a type of him, Heb. 7:2. (2.) In their original;

ver. 3. Melchisedec is represented as 'without father, without mother, without descent, having no beginning of days;' nothing being recorded of his birth and parentage, he is like an immortal. In this he was a notable type of Christ, who had no father as man, no mother as God, was God himself from eternity, and his goings forth were of old, from everlasting. (3.) In their continuance, because Melchisedec's death is no where recorded, ver. 8.; but is represented as one who liveth. So Christ our High Priest liveth for ever, to make intercession for us. (4.) In their office, Melchisedec was priest of the most high God, and king of Salem, or Jerusalem. So Christ is a Priest, who offered himself a sacrifice to God, and he is constituted King of Zion, of the church. (5.) In respect of unity. Melchisedec is set forth as having neither predecessor nor successor in his office. So Christ was set up to be a priest from everlasting, and is represented as a lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and the sacrifice that he offered being perfect, there is no more occasion for any other priests; and he has no successor, having an unchangeable and perpetual priesthood. (6.) In respect of dignity; Melchisedec being proposed as greater than Abraham. So Christ is greater than both: for he said, 'Before Abraham was, I am.' Thus Christ is a Priest, and that for ever. In this office is contained the grand relief of poor souls distressed and perplexed with the guilt and burden of their sins. When all other remedies have been tried in vain, it is the blood of the sacrifice of Christ, sprinkled by faith upon the trembling conscience, that must cool and refresh, and sweetly compose and settle it.

The doctrine arising from the text is,

DOCT. 'Christ executeth the office of a Priest, in his once offering himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew that Christ is truly and properly a Priest.

II. Explain the nature of Christ's priestly office.

III. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to shew that Christ is truly and properly a Priest. This is evident, if we consider, 1. That the scripture holds him forth as such, Psal. 110:4 and Heb. 5 and other places of that epistle. 2. Because he exercises the acts of the priestly office, in offering sacrifice, and praying for his people. 3. Because he was typified by such as were really priests, as all the Levitical priests, and Melchisedec.

Quest. Wherein did Christ's priestly office differ from the priestly office under the ceremonial law?

1. The priests under the law were priests after the order of Aaron: but Christ is a priest after the order of Melchisedec. Who this Melchisedec was, it is in vain to inquire, and cannot possibly be known; the Holy Ghost designedly concealing his genealogy, beginning and ending, and descent, that so he might be a fitter type of Christ and his everlasting priesthood. He was like a man dropt from the clouds, and at last caught up again, and none knew how. It is said of him, Heb. 7:3 that he was 'without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.' Now, Christ was a Priest after the order of this Melchisedec, not by a corporeal unction, legal ceremony, or the intervening act of a human ordination, but by a divine and heavenly institution, and immediate unction of the Spirit of life, in that extraordinary manner, whereby he was to be both King and priest unto God, as Melchisedec was, Heb. 7:16. He was not a Priest after the order of Aaron, because the law made nothing perfect, but was weak and unprofitable; and therefore was to be abolished, and to give place to another priesthood. Men were not to rest in it, but to be led by it to him who was to abolish it, Heb. 7:11, 12. The ministry and promises of Christ were better than those of the law; and therefore his priesthood, which was the office of dispensing them, was to be more excellent

too, Heb. 8:6. For when the law and covenant were to be abolished, the priesthood, in which they were established, was likewise to die.

2 The priests under the law were sinful men, and therefore offered sacrifices for their own sins, as well as for the sins of the people, Heb. 5:3. But Christ was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did once when he offered up himself,' Heb. 7:26, 27. He was perfectly pure and holy, and could stand before God even in the eye of his strict justice, 'as a lamb without blemish and without spot.' Though he 'made his soul an offering for sin,' yet he 'had done no iniquity, neither was there any guile found in his mouth.' And indeed his sacrifice had done us no good, had he been tainted with the least sin.

3. The priests under the law were many, because they were mortal; death as an universal deluge was continually sweeping them off the stage. But Christ as a Priest for ever, Psal. 110:4. Heb. 7:23. 'This man continueth ever.'

4. The priesthood under the law was changeable; but Christ's priesthood is unchangeable. The legal dispensation was to continue only for a time. It was but like the morning star to usher in the rising sun, which so soon as he appears in our horizon, it evanishes and shrinks away, Heb. 7:12. God confirmed this priesthood with an oath, Psal. 110:4. Heb. 7:21 as well as a King. Those offices which were divided before between two families, were both united and vested in Christ; this being absolutely necessary for the discharge of his Mediatory undertaking, and for the establishment of his kingdom, which being of another kind than the kingdoms of this world, even spiritual and heavenly, therefore needed such a King as was also a minister of holy things. And the apostle tells us, Heb. 7:24 that 'this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.'

5. The priests under the law offered many sacrifices, and of various kinds, as lambs and rams, calves and bullocks, and the blood of many beasts: but Christ offered but once, and that but one sacrifice, even the sacrifice of himself. So it is said, Heb. 9:25, 26. 'Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year, with the blood of others; (for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world): but now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.' And herein he excelled and far transcended all other priests, in this, that he had something of his own to offer. He had a body given him to be at his own disposal for this very end and purpose. It is said, Heb. 10:5, 7, 10. 'Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not but a body hast thou prepared me. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.' He offered up his body, and not only his body, but his soul also was made an offering for sin, Isa. 53:10. We had made a forfeiture both of our souls and bodies by sin. It was therefore necessary that the sacrifice of Christ should be answerable to the debt which we owed to God. And when Christ came to offer up his sacrifice he stood not only in the capacity of a Priest, but also in that of a Surety; and so his soul stood in the stead of ours, and his body in the stead of our bodies.

6. All those sacrifices that the priests offered under the law were types of the sacrifice of Christ, which he was to offer in the fulness of time, they not being sufficient in themselves to purge away sin, nor acceptable to God any further than Christ was eyed in them. But Christ's sacrifice was the thing typified by all these oblations, and is efficacious in itself for the satisfaction of justice, and the expiation of sin, Heb. 10:1, 4, 14. 'For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. For by one offering he hath

perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' His sacrifice was invaluablely precious, and of infinite efficacy and virtue. And such it behoved to be: for it being offered as an expiatory sacrifice, it ought to be proportioned and equivalent, in its own intrinsic value, to all the souls and bodies that were to be redeemed by it. So that as one rich diamond is more in worth than ten thousand pebbles, or one piece of gold than many counters, so the sacrifice of Christ's soul and body is far more valuable than all the souls and bodies in the world.

7. The priests under the law appeared before God in behalf of the people, in the temple made with hands; but Christ appeareth in heaven itself. The Levitical priests offered sacrifices and made prayers for the people in the temple; and the high priest, who was an eminent type of Christ, entered into the holy of holies, the figure of heaven, once a-year, and that not without blood. This was typical of Christ's entering into heaven itself in his people's name, to appear for them before the throne of God. Hence it is said, Heb. 9:24. 'For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.' 1 John 2:1. 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.'

8. The priests under the law had only the office of priesthood; but Christ is Prophet, Priest, and King.

II. Let us take a view of the nature of Christ's priesthood. The office of the priests was to offer sacrifices, and to pray for the people. Hence there are two parts of Christ's priestly office, namely, oblation of the sacrifice, and intercession.

Of CHRIST'S OBLATION

One part of Christ's priestly office was the oblation of a sacrifice. Where we may consider,

1. The import of offering.

2. What was the sacrifice.
3. How often he did offer himself.
4. For whom he did so.
5. For what ends he did offer himself.
6. The efficacy of his one offering.

First, I am to shew what the import of offering is. It signifies the voluntariness of Christ's sufferings, Eph. 5:2. 'Christ hath given himself for us, an offering, and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. He laid down his life of himself, that he might take it again. 'He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.' For,

1. Though he well knew his sufferings beforehand, and that dreadful storm of the divine wrath and indignation that was to fall upon him, and all the abuse, indignities, and torments, he was to meet with from wicked men and on the cross, yet he did not withdraw from that dreadful apparatus of a violent death when his time was come; he would not suffer his disciples, could they have done it, to rescue him from the impending danger: nay his delivering himself up to his blood-thirsty pursuers, after he had exhibited a remarkable instance of his divine power, in making them fall to the ground with a word, John 18:28 was an evidence, that he was nowise constrained, but a hearty volunteer in his then intended offering. The cup of his sufferings was continually before his eyes; he never declined to drink of it: yea, he was pained and straitened till he drank it to the bottom.

2. The strong cry he uttered immediately before his yielding up his soul on the cross, was an evidence there was more than a natural power attending him in that important crisis. He was no criminal in the eye of God and scripture, and could not have been put to death unless he had pleased, being the most high God, and Sovereign of men and angels, and therefore having the whole creation at his

command. The strong cry he then uttered was not the effect of weakness or reluctance to part with his life, such as a criminal may be supposed to give, but rather a shout of triumph, proceeding from one who had spontaneously offered himself to such a dreadful death, testifying before God, angels, and men, his joy and exultation in having performed the arduous work he had of his own proper motion engaged to achieve.

Secondly, Let us consider what was the sacrifice he offered up. On this head it may not be improper to observe, that sacrifices were of two sorts.

1. Some were eucharistical, or thank-offerings in testimony of homage, subjection, duty, and service; as the dedication of the first fruits, the meat and drink offerings. By these the sacrificer acknowledged the bounty and goodness of God, and his own unworthiness to receive the least of his favours, rendered praise for mercies received, and desired the divine blessing. But Christ's sacrifice was not of this kind.

2. Some sacrifices were expiatory, for the satisfaction of justice, and the purging away of sin. The institution of this kind of sacrifices was upon a double account. (1.) That man is a sinner, and therefore obnoxious to the just indignation and extreme displeasure of the holy and righteous God, and laid fairly open to all the fierceness of wrath and vengeance. (2.) That God was to be propitiated, that so he might pardon man. These truths are rooted and deeply engraven in the natural consciences of men, as appears by the pretended expiations of sin among the Heathens. But they are more clearly revealed in sacred writ. Under the law, without the effusion of blood there was no remission, to intimate unto us, that God would not forgive sin without the atonement of justice, which required the death of the offender: but it being tempered with mercy, accepted of a sacrifice in his stead.

Of this last kind was the sacrifice of Christ, which he offered for us, even a sacrifice of expiation. All this was requisite to a real and proper sacrifice, concurred in his sacrifice. As,

1. The person offering was to be a priest. It was the peculiar office of a priest under the law to offer sacrifices. So says the apostle, Heb. 5:1. 'Every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.' In like manner Christ, that he might offer this sacrifice, was called to that office, and made an High Priest in the house of God; as appears from Heb. 5:4, 5, 6, and 10. He is called 'the Apostle and High Priest of our profession; and it is said, 'Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.'

2. There was something to be offered, and that was himself, He was the sacrifice that he offered up unto God. Our great High Priest behoved to have a sacrifice answerable to the debt that we owed to God; and the debt was the forfeiture of both soul and body to the wrath of God, and the curse of the law: and therefore our High Priest was to have a soul and body to suffer in as our Surety. 'He made his soul an offering for sin,' Isa. 53:10. 'My soul,' says he 'is exceeding sorrowful even unto death. A body hast thou prepared me,' Heb. 10:5. And it is said, Heb. 10:10. 'We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once. He himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree,' 1 Pet. 2:24. He took upon him our nature, that he might have a proper sacrifice to offer. Christ was a sacrifice in his human nature. He suffered in his soul and body. It is to be observed, that doing or suffering belongs to the whole person. Hence the church is said to be redeemed with 'the blood of God,' Acts 20:28. Yet the notion of a sacrifice importing suffering, and the divine nature not being capable of it, he himself was the sacrifice indeed, not in the divine, but in the human nature. Even as a murderer is said to kill a man, though he kill not the soul. Now, that he suffered in his body, appears from the history of his passion in the evangelists. And his soul-sufferings also are evident from the same

history. His sufferings in his soul he himself testifies, when he says, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.' These were the soul of his sufferings, and far greater than those of his body. They consisted (1.) In his being deserted of God, whereby all comfort was eclipsed from his holy soul, Psal. 22:1. 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (2.) In the impressions of God's wrath on it, which produced that bloody sweat in the garden, by which blood transpired from his sacred body. God knew how to let him feel his wrath as our Surety; and yet was pleased with him as a Son. (3.) In the assaults of the powers of darkness and spiritual wickednesses, who assailed him with redoubled fury in that hour of darkness. The prince of this world attacked him more fiercely then than ever before.

3. There was an altar on which this sacrifice was offered: for it is the altar that sanctifieth the offering, and renders it acceptable to God, and useful to man; and that was his divine nature. 'Through the eternal Spirit,' says the apostle, 'he offered himself without spot unto God,' Heb. 9:14 and so by his blood purgeth our consciences from dead works. For Christ as God sanctified himself as man, that so, through the virtue and merit of his sacrifice, his people might be sanctified also, John 17:19. There behoved to be something to add an infinite value and efficacy to the sufferings of his humanity; which could be nothing else but the divine nature. The human nature suffered, and the divine nature sanctified the humanity; and, by reason of this admirable union, and the reflection of the Divinity upon the humanity, what was done to the human nature upon the cross is ascribed to the whole person. They 'crucified the Lord of glory,' says the apostle; and, 'God purchased the church with his own blood.' It was this that made his sufferings acceptable and highly pleasing to God, whose justice was to be appeased and satisfied; and it was this that made them efficacious for man, whose happiness and commerce with God were to be restored and his guilt removed. So that he had a human nature that served for a sacrifice, and a divine nature wherein he subsisted, from whence that sacrifice derived an infinite dignity and value. Thus Christ was a priest in his person, a sacrifice in his humanity, and the altar in his Divinity.

4. In a sacrifice the things offered were to be of God's appointment, or else it had not been an acceptable sacrifice, but will worship; and no more a sacrifice on God's account, than the cutting off a dog's neck, or offering swine's blood, as appears by the law given by Moses concerning free-will offerings, Lev. 5. So that what Christ offered was appointed and prepared by God. He prepared him a body, that he might offer it for a sacrifice. It was a living body, a body animated with a rational soul, which soul was separated from his body in the offering; and therefore he is said to 'have made his soul an offering for sin;' and that soul and body constituted his human nature. This was the sacrifice that was appointed of God for the expiation of the elect's sin. Hence says the apostle, 1 Pet. 1:18, 19. 'Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold;—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

5. The thing offered in sacrifice was to be destroyed. This is essential to a sacrifice. Those things that were endued with life were killed, that so they might be offered to God in sacrifice, and their blood was poured out, and the other parts of them, besides the blood were burned with fire, either wholly or in part. And thus was Christ sacrificed. His dying and bleeding on the cross, answered the killing and shedding of the blood of the Levitical sacrifices: and his sufferings (expressed by the pains of hell) were correspondent to the burning of these sacrifices. It is said, Heb. 13:12, 13. 'Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.' His sufferings without the gate are held forth here, as answering the burning of the sacrifices without the camp.

6. The person to whom the sacrifices were offered, was God, and he only. It was gross idolatry to offer them to any other. Hence they are called 'things pertaining to God,' Heb. 5:1 and Christ's sacrifice was thus offered up to God, Heb. 2:17. He performed the office of a merciful and faithful High Priest in offering up himself a sacrifice to God. God was the party offended by man's sin, and whose justice

behoved to be satisfied, Eph. 5:2. Here is a mystery of wonders, where one party is the party offended, the priest, and the sacrifice.

Thirdly, I come now to consider how often Christ did offer himself. It was only once, Heb. 9:28. 'Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;' and that one and once offering fully answered the end of his offering himself: for, says the apostle, 'by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,' Heb. 10:14. This was the difference, as I have observed above, between the Levitical priests and our High Priest, that they offered many sacrifices, which argued the imperfection of their ministry; but Christ only once, Heb. 10:14 just cited. As for the notion of the sacrament's being changed into a sacrifice, as the Papists pretend, there is no foundation for it: for there Christ is not offered to God, but to us; and it is no renewal of that sacrifice, but a solemn commemoration of it.

Fourthly, I go on to shew for whom Christ offered himself a sacrifice.

1. It was not for his own sins, for he had none; but for the sins and transgressions of others, Dan. 9:26. 'The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself.' He could not suffer for any sin of his own; for he was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.' Though he made his soul an offering for sin, yet he had done no iniquity, neither was guile found in his mouth. As the legal lambs were without blemish, so Christ was a Lamb without spot. His extraordinary and miraculous conception in the womb of a virgin was an effectual bar against original sin, and he had no actual sin in the course of his life. He was infinitely holy as God, and habitually holy as man. Every power and faculty of his soul, and every member of his body, was elevated and raised to the highest pitch of holiness. And he fulfilled all righteousness in his life, and gave complete satisfaction to all the demands of the law; so that he needed not, as the Levitical priests, first to offer sacrifice for his own sin, and then for the sins of the people.

2. Christ did not offer up this sacrifice for the sins of fallen angels; for there was no sacrifice appointed for them. Whenever they rebelled against their sovereign Lord and Creator, they were immediately expelled from the divine presence, and are kept in everlasting chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day. Christ took not upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. He offered up the sacrifice of himself to make an atonement for the sins of men.

3. Christ did not die a sacrifice for every man and woman in the world. It is true, there was virtue and efficacy enough in his oblation to satisfy offended justice for the sins of the whole world, yea, and of millions of worlds more; for his blood hath infinite value, because of the infinite dignity and excellency of his person. And in this sense some divines understand those places of scripture where he is called the Saviour of the whole world. Yet the efficacy and saving virtue of his sacrifice extendeth not unto all. For,

1st. It is restricted in scripture to a certain number, called sometimes the church of God, as Acts 20:28. 'Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood,' Eph. 5:25. 'Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it.' Sometimes they are called his sheep, as John 10:15. 'I lay down my life for my sheep.' They are also called those that were given to him by the Father, John 17:2. 'Thou hast given him power of all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.' See also John 10:26–29. In these places of scripture, and others that might be named, you see that Christ's death is restricted to a certain number of persons, exclusive of all others.

2dly, If Christ would not pray for every one in the world, then certainly he did not die for every one in particular. But so it is that he excludes the reprobate world from the benefit of his prayer, John 17:9. 'I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me.' Both the parts of Christ's priesthood, his offering sacrifice and his intercession, are of the same latitude and extent. We find them joined together in the scripture by an inseparable connection, Rom.

8:34. 'It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us, 1 John 2:1, 2. 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins. So that Christ intercedes for all those for whom he satisfied offended justice: but he intercedes not for the whole world, but only for those whom God hath given him; and therefore he did not satisfy offended justice for all men.

3dly, Christ's death is an act of the highest love that ever was or can be manifested to the world. 'Greater love,' says he, 'hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' And says the apostle, Rom. 5:8. 'God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' Now, it is plain, and cannot be denied, that every one of Adam's posterity is not the object of Christ's dearest love: and therefore he did not lay down his life for every one of them.

4thly, To affirm that Christ offered up himself a sacrifice with a design and intention to save all mankind, great absurdities would follow. As,

(1.) That Christ died for many, yea for innumerable multitudes, who never heard of his blessed name, nor of the blessings and benefits which were purchased by his death.—But this runs cross to the strain and current of the scripture, which tells us plainly, that there can be no salvation but by faith in Christ; and that without hearing of him there can be no faith, Rom. 10:14, 15, 16.

(2.) If Christ died for all, then this absurdity would follow, that he died for those whom he knew to be children of wrath and sons of perdition, whom God had passed by, and left to perish eternally in that miserable condition into which they had plunged themselves by sin.

(3.) If Christ died for all men, then he died for those who are now roaring in hell, and scorched and tormented with unquenchable fire, without any hope of redemption; and so he bare the punishment of their sins, and they are also now bearing and shall bear it for ever themselves.

(4.) If Christ died with an intention to save all men, then he is an imperfect and incomplete Saviour, who hath satisfied offended justice for their sins, and purchased redemption by his blood, but cannot apply it. He is only a true Saviour of those who are actually saved, and obtain salvation by him.

(5.) If Christ died for all men, then he died in vain for the most part, and his death and sacrifice had little effect; for the generality of men and women will perish eternally. There are many nations in the world that never heard of Christ; and even where the gospel is preached, our Saviour tells us, that 'wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many go in thereat; but that strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it, Mat. 7:12, 13. 'Many are called, but few are chosen.' So that Christ did not offer up the sacrifice of himself for every one in particular.

4. Christ died for the elect, and for all the elect, and none else. God designed to save some of the lost posterity of Adam, for the manifestation of the glory of the exceeding riches of his grace; and Christ died for all these, Eph. 1:4, 5, 6, Compare the following scriptures, Acts 13:48. Rom. 4:25 and 5:8. 1 Cor. 15:3, 4. 1 Pet. 2:21, 24. &c. from which we may be fully convinced that Christ died only for the elect.

Fifthly, I come now to shew, for what ends Christ offered up himself a sacrifice. It was to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God. The grand design and intendment of this oblation was to stone, pacify, and reconcile God, by giving him a full and adequate satisfaction for the sins of the elect world. So the apostle teaches us,

Col. 1:20. 'Having made peace by the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself.' 2 Cor. 5:19. 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,' &c. Reconciliation is the making up of that breach which sin had made between God and us, and restoring us again to the forfeited favour and friendship of Heaven. This was the design and intendment of Christ's sacrifice, Eph. 2:16. Now, Christ's sacrifice, abundantly satisfied these ends. And therefore I proceed,

Sixthly, To prove that Christ gave full satisfaction to the justice of God for the sins of all the elect. This is clear and evident,

1. From many texts of scripture which merit your perusal, as Eph. 5:2. Heb. 7:26, 27. 10:14 and 9:13, 14.

2. Christ's resurrection from the dead proves the validity and completeness of his satisfaction. As the elect's Surety, he satisfied the law in his death; and having thereby paid all their debt, he received an acquittance, and the discharge was solemnly published to the world in his resurrection. He was released from the grave, as from prison, by a public sentence; which is an undeniable argument of the validity of the payment made by him in our name. For being under such strong bands as the justice and power of God, God could never have loosed the pains of death, if his sufferings had not been fully satisfactory to God, and received and accepted by him for our discharge. And it is observable to this purpose, that the raising of Christ is ascribed to God as reconciled, Heb. 13:20. The divine power was not put forth in loosing the bands of death till God was pacified. Justice incensed exposed him to death, and justice appeased raised him from the dead. If he had not paid all his people's debt by sacrifice, he had been detained a prisoner for ever in the grave. But God having received full satisfaction, set him free.

3. His ascension into heaven proves the completeness and all-sufficiency of his sacrifice. If he had been excluded from the divine presence, there had been just cause to suspect, that anger had been

still resting in the breast of God; but his admission into heaven is an infallible testimony that God is reconciled. Our Saviour produces this as the convincing argument by which the Holy Ghost will effectually overcome the guilty fears of men, John 16:10. 'He will convince the world of righteousness, because I go to my Father.' Christ in his sufferings was numbered among transgressors; he died as a guilty person; but having overcome death, and returned to his Father again, he made the innocence of his person manifest and apparent, and shewed that a complete righteousness is acquired by his sufferings, sufficient to justify all those who shall truly accept of it.

4. The many excellent benefits which God reconciled bestows upon his people, prove the completeness of Christ's satisfaction.

(1.) Justification is a fruit of Christ's death; for the obligation of the law is made void by it, whereby the sinner was bound over to eternal wrath and punishment; Col. 2:14. 'Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, 'nailing it to his cross.' The terms are here used which are proper to the cancelling of a civil bond. The killing letter of the law is abolished by the blood of the cross; the nails and the spear, which pierced his sacred body, have rent it in pieces, to intimate that its condemning power is taken away. The forgiveness of sin is the chief part of our redemption, and it is ascribed to Christ's blood as the procuring cause of it, Eph. 1:7. 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.' The payment made by the Surety is a discharge of the principal debtor from the pursuit of the creditor. As Christ took away the curse from his people, being made a curse for them; so he takes away sin from his people, being made sin for them.

(2.) The death of Christ procured grace and holiness for men. We made a forfeiture of our original righteousness and sanctity, and were justly deprived of it; and till once divine justice was appeased, all influences of grace were suspended. Now, the sacrifice of Christ opened heaven, and brought down the Spirit, who is the principal

and efficient cause of sanctification in men. The whole world lay in wickedness, as a dead carcase in the grave, entirely insensible of its horror and corruption. But the Holy Spirit inspired it with new life, and by a marvellous change hath caused purity to succeed corruption. It had been a great favour indeed to be delivered from the guilt of sin, that bound us over to everlasting wrath and punishment; but it had not been a perfect and complete favour, without our being delivered from the venom and filth of sin, which had infected and corrupted our whole nature. If our guilt were only removed, we had been freed from punishment; but without the restoration of the divine image we had not been qualified for heaven, and fitted for converse with God. It was necessary that our souls should be washed, and our faculties renewed, to put us in a capacity to serve God and enjoy communion with him. And this is only obtained by Christ's death, Tit. 2:14.

(3.) The receiving believers into heaven is a convincing proof of the all-sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. The gates of the New Jerusalem were fast shut against sinful man, when he fell from his primitive holiness and felicity. God banished him from his presence, and drove him out of paradise, his native seat, fencing it with cherubims to prevent his re-entry. But Christ hath set open these everlasting doors, that believers may enter freely in, Heb. 10:19, 20. This shews the validity of his satisfaction. For divine justice will not permit that glory and immortality, which are the privileges of innocency and righteousness, should be given to guilty and polluted criminals; and therefore it was Christ's first and greatest work to remove the bar that excluded men from the sanctuary of felicity. Now, what stronger argument can there be, that God is infinitely pleased with what Christ has done and suffered for his people, than the taking of them into his presence to behold his glory? The apostle sets down this order in the work of our redemption, Heb. 5:9 that 'Christ being made perfect through sufferings, became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.' In short, it is observable, that the scripture attributes to the death of Christ, not only justification, whereby we are redeemed from wrath and misery, that dreadful

punishment which we deserved for sin, but such an abundant merit also, which purchases adoption for us, and all the glorious privileges of the sons of God.

From all which it is evident, that the sacrifice of Christ answered all the ends for which it was designed. It gave full satisfaction to the justice of God, and made up an everlasting peace between God and sinners.

Quest. What was it that rendered Christ's sacrifice so acceptable to God, and so efficacious for men?

Ans. 1. The quality of his person derived an infinite value to his obedience and sufferings. He was equally God, and as truly infinite in his perfections as the Father who was provoked by our sins. He was the eternal Son of God, equal with the Father in all things. The fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in him; and he is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. His person was of as great dignity and honour as the Father's was, to whom he was offered. Though there be a distinction of order among the persons of the Godhead, yet there is no priority, nor distinction of dignity. This made his sufferings of infinite and eternal value. For though his Deity was impassable, yet he that was a divine person suffered. And it is especially to be observed, that the efficacy of his blood is ascribed to the divine nature. So the apostle declareth, Col. 1:14. 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin.' The efficacy of the Deity mingled itself with every groan in his agony, and with every pang and cry upon the cross. And as his blood was the blood of God, as it is called, Acts 20:28 so his groans were the groans of God, and his cries the cries of God, and therefore of infinite value. What he acted and suffered as man, was dignified and rendered efficacious by his divine nature. From this arises the infinite difference between the sacrifices of the law, and the sacrifice of Christ, both in virtue and value. This is set down by the apostle with admirable emphasis, Heb. 9:13, 14. 'For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the

unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God; by the personal union with the Deity, great dignity was conferred upon the sufferings of the human nature.

2. The virtue and efficacy of Christ's sacrifice flowed from the infinite holiness and purity of his person. He was holy, harmless, &c. He was as free from blemish, as he was full of the Spirit. The spotlessness of his human nature was necessary to his being a sacrifice, and the union of the divine nature was necessary to his being a valuable sacrifice. He had no sin naturally imputed, and he had no sin personally inherent. He had no sin naturally imputed, because he was not descended from Adam by ordinary generation, who introduced sin into the world, and derived it down to all his progeny. He was holy in all his offices, harmless as a priest, faithful as a prophet, holy in his life and death; no guile was found in his mouth, nor any inordinate motions and desires in his heart. His sacrifice could not have availed us, if he had been tainted with the least sin.

3. The graces exercised in his sufferings rendered his sacrifice fragrant and acceptable to God, Phil. 2:8. 'He became obedient unto death.' His obedience ran with a cheerful and prevalent strain through the whole course of his life. He submitted to a body, fitted to receive all those strokes of wrath that we should have endured for ever; a body made under the law, subject to the obedience and malediction of it. He delighted to do the will of God in human nature, Psal. 40:6, 7. He came not to do his own will, but that of him who sent him. Whatever was ordered him by his Father, that he spake, did, and suffered. He cheerfully laid down his life when the hour appointed by the Father was come. It was not a simple, but an affectionate obedience: 'As the Father gave me commandment, (says he), so I do,' John 14:31. His offering himself a sacrifice according to the will of God for our sanctification, was the most significant part of his obedience. This rendered his sacrifice highly acceptable. Again, his admirable humility is joined with his obedience, as the cause of

his exaltation, which was an evidence of its fragrancy, Phil. 2:8. That the Lord of glory should stoop so low as to put himself in the room of sinners, eclipsing the bright lustre and splendour of his glory, and shrouding under the disguise of our infirm flesh, submitting himself to a harder piece of service, and to deeper degrees of humiliation, than ever any creature in heaven or earth was capable of; to descend from the throne of his inaccessible light, and to expose himself to the rage and fury of devils and men, without murmuring or impatience, to submit himself to an infamous death, endure the wrath of an offended God and Father, whom he infinitely loved, shed his precious blood, and descend into the grave; this was an inexpressible and inimitable act of humility, lower than which he could not stoop. Now, since humility renders men so pleasing to God, that he heaps upon them the greatest testimonies of his favours, and richly dispensed to them the gifts of his grace, it must needs render the Son most acceptable to the Father in these his sufferings, and draw from him the greatest testimonies and distributions of his favours, because it was the greatest act of humility, as well as of obedience, that could possibly be performed. Further, the high exercise of his faith, rendered his sacrifice most acceptable to God. He had not one spark of infidelity, nor any the least grain of distrust in the goodness of God, in the midst of his deepest sorrows. He suffered the torments of hell for a time, without that killing despair that preys upon the inhabitants of that dismal place. He had a working of faith under the sense of his Father's greatest displeasure and confidence in his love, while he felt the outward and inward force of his frowns. He had a faith of the acceptableness of his death for all his people, and gave clear evidence of his confidence in the promise, for a happy and glorious success, in his acting like a king, while he was hanging as a malefactor upon the cross, distributing his largesses to the poor thief, assuring him that on that very day he should be with him in paradise. Both his obedience to God in not turning his back, and his trust in God for his help and assistance, are joined together as the ground of his justification, Isa. 50:5, 7, 8. The light of his faith was to be discovered in opposition to Adam's unbelief, and his great humility in opposition to Adam's pride. By his active and passive obedience,

he glorified the holiness and justice of God; by his humility, the power and sovereignty of God; and by his trust and confidence, the divine faithfulness and veracity. All which must needs render his sacrifice a sweet smelling savour to God, and efficacious for men.

4. The completeness of Christ's satisfaction is grounded on the degrees of his sufferings. There was no defect in that payment which he made. We owed a debt of blood to the law of God, and his life was offered up as a sacrifice, otherwise the law had remained in its full force and vigour, and justice had continued unsatisfied. That a divine person hath suffered the punishment that we deserved, is properly the reason of our redemption; as it is not the quality of the surety that releases the debtor out of prison, but the payment which he makes in his name. The blood of Christ shed, and offered up to God, ratifies the New Testament. In short, our Saviour, in his death, suffered the malediction of the law, even all those degrees of divine wrath and vengeance which the elect should have suffered for ever in hell; and his divine nature gave a full value, and put a high price upon the sufferings of his human nature; so that the satisfaction proceeding from them had an intrinsic worth and value; and God, who was infinitely provoked, is thereby infinitely pleased.

5. The sacrifice of Christ was fragrant and efficacious, because of the great glory and honour which he thereby brought unto God. The glory of his Father was what he had in view, as his main scope and aim in all his actions and sufferings, and that which he also actually perfected. The glory of all the divine attributes appeared in him in its highest lustre, 2 Cor. 4:6. They all centered in him, and shone forth in their greatest splendor, not only in his incarnation, but also and chiefly in his sacrifice. The mercy and justice of God appear in combination here, and set off one another's lustre. Mercy could not be glorified, unless justice had been satisfied; and justice had not been evidently discovered, if the tokens of divine wrath had not been seen upon Christ. Grace had never sailed to us, but in the streams of the Mediator's blood. 'Without the shedding of blood (says the apostle) there is no remission.' Divine justice had not been so fully

known in the eternal groans and shrieks of a world of guilty creatures, nor could sin have appeared so odious to the holiness of God by eternal scars upon devils and men, as by a deluge of blood from the heart of this sacrifice. Without the sufferings of Christ, the glory of the divine perfections had lain in the cabinet of the divine nature without the discovery of their full beams. And though they were active in the designing of it, yet they had not been declared to men or angels, without the bringing of Christ to the altar. By the stroke upon his soul, all the glories of God flashed out to the view of the creature. All the divine perfections were glorified in the sufferings of Christ; his mercy, justice, power, and wisdom. Here the unsearchable depths of manifold wisdom were unfolded. Such a wisdom of God shined in the cross, as the angels never beheld in his face upon his throne; wisdom to cure a desperate disease, by the death of the physician; to turn the greatest evil to the greatest good; to bring forth mercy by the execution of justice, and the shedding of blood: how surprising and astonishing is this! The ultimate end and design of Christ's sacrifice was the honour of God in our redemption. Christ sought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him, John 8:50. He sought the glory of his Father in the salvation of men. Now, that must needs be fragrant and acceptable to God which accomplished the triumph of all his attributes.

Quest. But did not those sacrifices which were in use under the law satisfy the justice of God, and take away the sins of the people?

To this I answer in the negative. These sacrifices were but shadows by their institution, and were to have their accomplishment in some other, and therefore could make nothing perfect. See what the apostle Paul saith, who was once very zealous for them, Heb. 10:1, 4, 11. 'For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never, with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. And every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering

oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.' More particularly,

1. It was against common reason, that the sin of a soul should be expiated by the blood of a beast; that the sufferings of a nature so far inferior could be a sufficient compensation for the crime of a nature so much superior to it. The prophet spake the true reason of mankind when he asserted, that the Lord would not be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil; that he would not accept of the first-born of the body as a satisfaction for the sin of the soul, Micah 6:6. A rational sacrifice was only fit to atone for the sin of a rational being. There was no agreement between the nature of a man and that of a bullock. The nature that sinned was also to suffer, and so to bear the punishment due by the law. 'The soul that sinneth it shall die,' saith the Lord, Ezek. 18:4. If God had been content with the blood of beasts for the sins of men, then there had been no sufficient discovery of the severity of his justice, the purity of his holiness, nor the grandeur of his grace. It was inconsistent with the honour and majesty of God, who had denounced a terrible curse upon all the transgressors of the law, and published it with so much dread and awful solemnity, as thunders and lightnings, fire and smoke, and terrible earthquakes, to make so light of it, as to accept of the blood of a few mangled beasts, in the room of the offender. Would God appear upon mount Sinai with ten thousands of his angels to publish a fiery law, and let all the threatenings of it vanish into smoke? Can any in reason think, that all those fearful curses should be poured out upon a few irrational and innocent creatures, who had never broken that law? Can it ever enter into the heart of man to think, that, after so solemn and terrible a proclamation, he would acquiesce in so slight a compensation as the death of a poor beast? None can possibly entertain so mean and despicable thoughts of the infinite majesty, justice and holiness of God, or of the vile and detestable nature of sin, and the greatness of its provocation, as to imagine that the one could be contented, or the other expiated, by the blood of a lamb or a bullock. Our own consciences will tell us, that if God will have a sacrifice, it must be

proportioned to the majesty of him whom they have offended, and to the greatness of the crime which they have committed. If all the cattle upon a thousand hills were sacrificed, and all the cedars in Lebanon were cut down for wood to burn the offering, it could not be a sweet smelling savour to God. There is an infinite disproportion between this kind of sacrifice and the glorious Majesty of Heaven.

2. The repetition of those sacrifices shews their insufficiency for the expiation of sin. For where the conscience is once purged, and the remission of sin obtained, there is no more offering for sin, as the apostle tells us, Heb. 10:18. But the repeating of the sacrifice plainly intimates, that the person for whose sake it is repeated is in the same condition now that he was in at the time of the former oblation. The apostle tells us, that if the law could have made men perfect, then these sacrifices would have ceased to be offered, because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins, but in those sacrifices there was a remembrance again made of sins every year, Heb. 10:2, 3. Had the wrath of God been appeased by them, why should the fire burn perpetually upon the altar? why should it be so fed continually with the carcasses of slain beasts? As often as they were offered, there was a conscience of sin excited in the presenter of them, and iniquity was called to remembrance. The whole scene of the legal administration loudly proclaimed, that the wrath of God against sin was not appeased and that the guilt of the soul was not wiped off. If a man had presented a sacrifice for his sin one day, and fallen into the same or some other sin before night, he must have repeated his sacrifice for a new expiation. Had there been any efficacy in them to purge away sin, then they had ceased; and there would have been no repetition of them.

3. The great variety of these sacrifices shews their insufficiency to take away sin. There were many gifts and sacrifices, bulls and goats, calves and lambs; which shews that no one thing was fit to typify and represent the full expiation wrought by Christ; whereas he offered but one sacrifice, and by that perfected for ever them that are sanctified. As the application of many medicines shews their

insufficiency to cure a disease, so the many sacrifices and purifications under the law, plainly evidence that a full and efficacious propitiation for sin was to be sought elsewhere. If the great annual sacrifice, which was the most solemn one in that whole institution could not effect it, much less could sacrifices of a lower dignity. It is from the repetition of this great sacrifice that the apostle argues the insufficiency of them all, Heb. 10.

4. God never intended that these sacrifices should expiate sin by any virtue of their own. The great and glorious Majesty of heaven, who was offended and provoked by sin, is truly infinite; and to satisfy him the sacrifices must be infinite too. But none of those sacrifices under the law were so. Why then were they appointed? Not with any intention to purge away the sin of the soul, but the ceremonial uncleanness of the flesh, as Heb. 9:13, 14 where you see the blood of bulls and of goats sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh. The apostle compares these and the sacrifice of Christ together, and shews that the one purified only the flesh, and the other the conscience. It was not a moral guilt which they were intended to remove, but only a ceremonial one; as when one was defiled by touching a dead carcase or a leprous person, which was reckoned a defilement of the body, not of the soul. God hath often discovered their weakness and insufficiency, and that they could not give him recompense for the injury done him by sin. So Isa. 66:1. 'Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?' By the house or temple here is meant all the Jewish economy, the whole lump of legal sacrifices. Though all these were appointed by God, and had been used by his people for a long time, yet he had no rest in them: they could neither satisfy his justice nor vindicate the honour of his law, nor could they ever take away sin, Heb. 10:11. And therefore God rejected them, and they were abolished and disannulled, for the weakness and unprofitableness of them, Heb. 7:18. Though they had been practised by the Jews for so many ages, yet not one sin had been expiated by them in all that long tract of time.

5. The insufficiency of these sacrifices for the satisfaction of divine justice, and the expiation of sin, appears from the end and design of their institution, which was to prefigure and represent a more excellent sacrifice, that was able to do it effectually, even the great sacrifice of Christ. They were but shadows of good things to come, as the apostle terms them, and did typically represent a crucified dying Christ as the substance: and whatever virtue they had, it was not in or from themselves, but from their typical relation to him whom they prefigured. They all pointed forth the sacrifice of Christ, by whose precious blood, shed in the fulness of time, the sins of the elect were fully expiated. God had no pleasure in these sacrifices, but only so far as they represented the sacrifice of Christ, which effectually takes away sin, Heb. 10:6, 7, 8.

From what hath been said on this head, you see that those sacrifices which were in use under the law could not satisfy the justice of God, and take away the sins of men.

Object. If Christ suffered for the sins of his people, then he that was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, must be accounted a guilty person, yea, even the most guilty of all others, as having charged upon him all the sins of an elect world.

Ans. There is a twofold guilt to be considered, namely, a culpable, and a penal guilt. He that commits the offence is under culpable guilt; and he who is obliged to suffer for the offence is under penal guilt, though he did not actually commit it. Now, Christ as our sacrifice was under this penal guilt; the offences committed by us were charged upon him; and by his voluntary undertaking to be a sacrifice for us, he came under an obligation to suffer for us, as if he had really sinned, though we only were the transgressors. This is plain in the case of those legal sacrifices, which were shadows of Christ. It appears from them, that these two sorts of guilt may be separated, so that he who is not culpably guilty may be penally guilty, and may justly suffer though he did not personally sin: for the sins of the people being laid upon these sacrifices, they were under penal

guilt, and did justly suffer as if they had sinned; and yet they were not culpably guilty; for they neither had sinned, nor were they capable of sinning.

Quest. Seeing Christ offered up his sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and he himself is God, how could he die and make satisfaction to himself?

Ans. 1. God cannot be said properly to satisfy himself; for that would be the same thing as to pardon sin simply, without any satisfaction.

2. There is a twofold consideration of Christ, one in respect of his divine nature or essence, in which sense he is both the object against which the offence is committed, and to whom for it the satisfaction is made: and there is another consideration of Christ in respect of his person, and economy or office; in which sense he properly satisfied God, seeing he was, in respect of his manhood, another and inferior to God. So he says, John 14:28. 'My Father is greater than I.' The blood of the man Christ Jesus is the matter of the satisfaction; the divine nature dignifies it, and makes it of infinite value.

3. It is not inconsistent with reason, that the Son of God, clothed in our nature, should by his death make satisfaction to the Deity, and consequently to himself. For in the according of two different parties, a person that belongs to one of them may interpose for reconciliation, provided that he divests his own interest, and leaves it with the party from which he comes. As for instance, let us suppose two persons, a father and a son, both possessed of the supreme power, and offended by rebellious subjects: It is not inconsistent that the Son interpose as a Mediator to restore them to the favour of the prince his father. And by this he also reconciles them to himself, and procures pardon for that offence, by which his own majesty was wronged. Now, this is a fit illustration of the great work of our redemption, so far as human things can represent divine. For all the persons of the holy Trinity were equally provoked by our sin; and to obtain our pardon, the Son, with the consent of the Father, deposits

his interests in his hands, and as a Mediator intervenes between us and his Father, who in this transaction is considered as the guardian of the rights of Heaven; and having performed what divine justice required, he reconciled the world to God, i. e. to the Father, himself, and the eternal Spirit. In this case his person is the same, but his quality is different. He made satisfaction as a Mediator, and received it as God; which is no way inconsistent.

Quest. Seeing Christ really suffered for the sins of his people, whether did he suffer the same punishment that they deserved, and which the law threatened, or only something equivalent to it? It would seem that Christ did not suffer the same thing that the law threatened, and which we justly deserved for sin: for then he must have suffered eternal death. It was not only the first, but the second death that the law threatened. Therefore Christ's temporal death did not satisfy the law and justice of God for us.

There are very learned and pious writers on both sides of this question. Yet I humbly think, that, without any inconvenience, both may be affirmed in different respects. To clear this, you would know, that the punishment which Christ endured in our stead may be considered either as to its substance or essence, or with respect to the accidental circumstances which attend it when inflicted on the damned. Now, if we consider it as to substance or essence, it was the very same which the sinner should have undergone. Man by his fall was liable to death, and to the curse and wrath of God, and Christ hath borne this in the elect's room. But if we consider it with respect to the accidental circumstances which attend it when it is inflicted on the damned, then it was not the very same, but a punishment equivalent to it. The accidental circumstances of this punishment as inflicted on the damned, are, blasphemy, rage, and an impotent fierceness of mind, which are not appointed by the law, but are only accidentals, arising from the wickedness and perverseness of their spirits. Now, our blessed Saviour was not, nor possibly could be, liable to these. The great holiness and sanctity of his person effectually secured him against all these. Besides, the punishment

that is inflicted upon the damned is eternal, and attended with final despair, and the intolerable anguish of a guilty stinging conscience. This is the never-dying worm that gnaws upon their vitals. But Christ the Redeemer having no real guilt, was not liable to the worm of conscience; and his temporary sufferings were equivalent to the eternal punishment of the damned, and fully satisfactory to divine justice, on account of the infinite dignity and excellency of his person; so that he was not capable of despair.

Thus it evidently appears, that Christ offered himself a sacrifice to satisfy the justice of God offended by sin. And in order to confirm your faith in this important article, one of the fundamental doctrines of our holy religion, let me again call your attention to the following particulars, which I shall but barely mention.

1. Consider the necessity of this satisfaction. Without shedding of blood there is no remission, The justice of God, the nature of sin, and the sanction of the law necessarily required it. And the event manifests it; for it is not conceivable, how, if sin could have been taken away, with a bare word, the Lord would have fetched a compass by the blood of his own Son.

2. Consider the truth of it. Christ did really and truly, by the sacrifice of himself, satisfy the justice of God for us. For he bare the punishment due to our sins, Isa. 53:5. He died for us, in our room and stead, Rom. 5:6, 7.; and not for our good only, which may be said of all the martyrs. Compare 1 Cor. 1:13. He bought us with his blood and gave himself a ransom for our souls, and so has taken away our sins in the guilt thereof. His sufferings were the sufferings of a divine person; and so, though not infinite in duration, yet infinite in value. He was Lord of his own life.

3. Consider the perfection of it. He satisfied completely for the sins of the people. His satisfaction fully answered the demands of the justice and law of God. This is plain from the excellency of the person suffering, Col 1:19.: this the apostle testifies, Heb. 10:14 forecited;

and from the discharge he got in his resurrection, and exaltation to the Father's right hand. Whatever is left to his people to suffer it is not to satisfy the justice of God, but for their correction, that they be made partakers of his holiness.

Having thus shewed that one end for which Christ offered up himself a sacrifice to God, was to satisfy his justice, I proceed,

SECONDLY, To shew that another end, as a native consequence of the other, was to reconcile elect sinners unto God. Here I shall,

1. Explain the nature of Christ's reconciliation.
2. Prove that reconciliation with God is the blessed fruit and effect of Christ's death.
2. Shew what influence the death of Christ has on this.

First, As to the nature of reconciliation, several things are implied in it. As,

1. A former friendship and favour. God and man were once in good terms. There was a time wherein they met and lovingly conversed together. When Adam dropt from the fingers of his Creator, he was the friend and favourite of Heaven. He had the law of God written on his heart, and a strong bent and inclination in his will to obey it. In that state there was no place for reconciliation: for then there was no breach between God and his creature.

2. It implies an enmity between God and man. Man fell from his primitive state of favour and friendship with Heaven, and joined issue with the devil, God's greatest enemy. Whereupon the Lord took the forfeiture of his possession, turned him out of paradise, and hindered his re-entrance by a flaming sword. There is now a dreadful war betwixt earth and heaven. Men daily rebel against God's laws, labouring to beat down his interest in the world, and employing all their powers and faculties, mercies and comforts, as weapons of

unrighteousness to fight against him. And he is all enemy to them; for he hates all the workers of iniquity, and the foolish cannot stand in his sight. His wisdom, holiness, justice, and power, stand ready charged against them, and they are liable to his eternal vengeance. This is the state wherein man stands with God on the account of sin.

3. Reconciliation with God lies in his receiving rebels into favour, and issuing forth a gracious act of indemnity for all their sins, and cancelling all those bands of guilt whereby they were bound over to eternal wrath and misery. This great blessing formally consists in his 'not imputing their trespasses unto them;' 2 Cor. 5:19. The forfeiture is taken off, and they are admitted into his former friendship and favour. Now, this is twofold; fundamental and actual.—There was a foundation laid for this reconciliation in the death of Christ. This is the mean by which it was purchased, and the chief and only ground why God lays aside his anger. 'He made peace,' says the apostle, 'by the blood of his cross.' And it is actual, when the offer of reconciliation is complied with by faith. He sends forth his ambassadors, clothed with his authority, to pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, declaring his great willingness to receive them into favour; and when men embrace the offer of reconciliation, then God actually lays aside his anger, and imputes sin no more to them.

Secondly, I proceed to prove that it is only through Christ that sinners can obtain reconciliation with God. This is clear,

1. From the holy scriptures, where this great truth is expressly declared. So it is said, Acts 4:12. 'Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.' And we are elsewhere told, that 'there is but one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. And he is called the Saviour of the world, not only by way of excellency, in respect of the great danger he saves us from, but by way of exclusion also, in regard of the sole designation of his person to this office, exclusive of all others. 'If ye believe not that I

am he,' says he, 'ye shall die in your sins,' John 8:24. He is the only person that was designed in all the prophecies, promises, and types. He is the only Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He is the promised seed of the woman, that was to break the serpent's head. The heart of God is fixed upon him alone, and his resolution concerning the duration of his office is immutable and unalterable. He hath summed up all the dispensations of former ages in him, Eph. 1:10. All other things were preparations to and shadows of him; God, who had various ways of communicating himself to men, hath summed up his whole will in his Son, and manifested and declared that all his transactions with men did terminate in him.

2. The truth of this doctrine will appear, that none else was ever fitted for the management of this work. God and men were to be reconciled, and none but he that was God and man in one person could be a fit day's man to lay his hand upon both. Had he been only man, he had been incapable to satisfy offended justice; and had he been only God, he had been incapable of suffering. But being God and man, he is fitted for both. Infinite satisfaction was requisite to appease the anger of God; for without this, guilt would have remained: and none else was capable to give it, but Christ, in regard of the infinite dignity and excellency of his person. It was upon no other person that the Spirit descended like a dove to furnish his human nature with all needful abilities for the discharge of his trust.

3. If we consider that none else ever did that for us which was necessary for our reconciliation with God. It was he that answered the demands of the law, and silenced the roaring of vindictive justice. He only filled up the gap that was between God and sinners. It was only Christ that interposed himself as a shelter between the wrath of God and the souls of men. The prophet Isaiah tells us, that 'he bare our griefs, and carried our sorrows, and that the chastisement of our peace was upon him.' He received into his own bowels the sword of justice that was sharpened and pointed for us. He tread the wine-press alone, and none of the people were with him. He endured the bruises of God, the darts of the devil, and the reproaches of men; and

would not desist till he had laid the foundation of an everlasting peace between God and sinners.

4. If ye consider that none else was ever accepted of God but this Mediator. The legal sacrifices were not able to make the comers thereunto perfect, Heb. 10:1. They were only shadows of good things to come; Christ was the substance and complement of them all; and they were no farther regarded of God but as they were types and representations of his Son. The daily repetition of them was an undeniable evidence of their inability to effect the reconciliation of man; but the blood of Christ typified by the blood sprinkled by Moses upon the people, does it effectually. This was a sacrifice wherein God smelt a sweet savour, and was highly accepted of him.

Thirdly, It remains to shew you what Christ did in bringing about this reconciliation.

1. He undertook this work in the eternal transaction that was between the Father and him, as I have shown you formerly at large.

2. He purchased reconciliation by his death, and thereby procured the egress of the divine favour to man. This was the prime article in the covenant of grace, 'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed,' Isa. 53:10. God required this sacrifice exclusive of all others, which were entirely useless for the satisfaction of justice, though fit to prefigure the grand sacrifice that God intended. It was by the death of Christ alone that reconciliation was purchased to men, Rom. 5:10. Eph. 2:13 and Col. 1:21. And when he was upon the cross he cried, 'It is finished;' that is, the work of redemption is accomplished, reconciliation is purchased, I have done all that was appointed for me to do, the articles on my part are now fulfilled, there remain no more deaths for me to suffer.

3. He brings about an actual reconciliation between God and sinners by virtue of his efficacious intercession, Heb. 7:25. His advocacy in heaven is the gracious spring of all divine communications. It is by

this that he deals with God in the behalf of men; he leads every believer by the hand as it were unto the gracious presence of God, bespeaking acceptance for them after this manner: 'Father, here is a poor creature that was born in sin, and hath lived in rebellion all his days; he hath broken all thy laws, and deserves all thy wrath; yet he is one of that number that thou gavest me before the world began; and I have made full payment to thy justice by my blood for all his debt; and now I have opened his eyes to see the sinfulness and misery of his condition: I have broken his heart for his rebellions against thee and bowed his will into obedience to the offer of thy grace: I have united him to me by faith, as a living member of my mystical body: and now, since he is mine by regeneration, let him also become thine by a special acceptance: since thy justice is satisfied for his sins, let thine anger also be turned away, and receive him graciously into favour.' In a word, the reconciliation of every elect person with God, is actually brought about by Christ: He opens their eyes, and lets them see their sin and danger: he beats down the stubbornness and obstinacy of their wills, and brings up their hearts to a full compliance with the offers of peace made in the gospel; and he leads them to God, and makes their persons and duties acceptable to him. Hence it is said, Eph. 1:6. 'He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

Before I proceed to the consideration of the second part of Christ's priestly office, namely, his intercession. I shall make some improvement of the doctrine of his satisfaction.

1. Here we may see the horrid and hateful evil of sin, which no other sacrifice could expiate but the blood of the Son of God. As the strength of a disease is known and seen by the quality and force of the medicine that is made use of to cure it, and the virtue of a commodity by the greatness of the price that it laid down to buy it; so is the matter here. The sufferings and death of Christ express the evil of sin far above the severest judgments that ever were inflicted upon any creature. The dying groans of our blessed Redeemer set forth the horrid nature of sin, and loudly proclaim how hateful it is in the eye

of an infinitely pure and holy God. How much evil must there be in sin that made Christ to groan and bleed to death to take it away! It is strange to imagine how rational agents should dare to commit such an evil, so freely and openly, and that for trifles and perishing vanities, which are of no continuance and duration. Can they escape, or can they possibly endure, the wrath and vengeance of an incensed Deity? If God spared not his own Son, when he came in the likeness of sinful flesh, how shall sinners escape, who are deeply and universally defiled? Can they encounter with the fury of the Almighty, the very apprehensions of which made Christ's soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death? Have they patience to endure and bear that for ever, which was intolerable for Christ to bear but for a few hours, who had all the strength of the Deity to support him? If it was so with the green tree, what shall become of the dry, when exposed to the fiery trial? O what prodigious madness is it for men to drink iniquity like water, as a harmless thing, when it is a poison so dangerous and deadly, that the least drop of it brings certain ruin? What desperate and monstrous folly is it to have slight apprehensions of that which is attended with the first and second death; even with all the terrors and torments of hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; where misery will continue in its full extremity, while eternity runs its endless course! Nothing but unreasonable infidelity and want of thought can make men venturous to provoke the living God, who is infinitely sensible of their sins, and who both can and will most terribly punish them for ever.

2. This lets us see the strictness and inexorable severity of divine justice, that required satisfaction equivalent to the desert of sin. All the other demonstrations of it which God hath given to the world, are nothing to this. God spared not his own Son. The fountain of divine mercy stopt its course, and would not let out one drop to Christ in the day of his extreme sorrow and sufferings. The Father of mercies saw his dear Son sweating great drops of blood in a cold night, and crying out with a mournful accent, 'O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;' and yet he would not grant the request. O the

inflexible severity of divine justice! What will ye do, sinners, when it falls upon you in hell? If the blessed Son of God cried so out, what will become of you? How will impenitent sinners roar and yell for ever under the dreadful strokes of incensed justice! O what a dreadful thing must it be to fall into the hands of the living God!

3. See here the wonderful love of Christ to poor miserable sinners, and his great desire for the salvation of their souls. His love here passeth knowledge. It infinitely transcends the reach of the most illuminated understanding. What Christ suffered from his birth to his death on the accursed tree, affords the most striking instance of his great love to poor sinners. No example of such love can be found among men. This matchless love of Christ should inflame our hearts to sing, as Rev. 1:5, 6. 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'

4. This doctrine affords us the strongest assurance that can be, that God is willing to pardon our sins, and to be reconciled to us. There is in the natural conscience of man, when opened by a piercing conviction, such a quick sense of guilt, and of God's avenging justice, that it can never have an entire confidence in his mercy till justice be atoned. From hence the convinced sinner is restlessly inquisitive how to find out the way of reconciliation with a holy and righteous God. Thus he is represented inquiring by the prophet, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' The scripture tells us, that some consumed their children in the fire, to render their idols propitious to them: but all these means were ineffectual, their most costly sacrifices were only food for the fire; nay, instead of expiating their old sins, they committed new ones by them, and were so far from appeasing, that they inflamed the wrath of God by their cruel

oblations. But in the gospel there is the most rational and easy way propounded for the satisfaction of divine justice, and the justification of man. Hence says the apostle, Rom. 10:6, 7, 9. 'The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above); or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' The apostle here sets forth the care and anxiety of an awakened conscience. He is at a loss to find out a way to escape deserved judgment: for such things as are on the surface of the earth or floating on the waters are within our view, and may easily be obtained; but those which are above our understandings to discover, or our power to obtain, are proverbially said to be in the heavens above, or in the depths beneath; and it is applied here to the different ways of justification by the law and by the gospel. The law propounds life upon an impossible condition. But the gospel clearly reveals to us, that Christ hath performed all that was necessary to our justification, and that by a true faith we shall have an interest in it. Christ's ascension into heaven is a convincing proof, that the propitiation for our sins is perfect; for otherwise he had not been received into God's sanctuary, and admitted into the sacred place. Therefore to be under anxious and perplexing inquiries how we may be justified, is to deny the value of Christ's righteousness, and the truth of his ascension. By virtue of the sacrifice and righteousness of Christ, the soul is not only freed from the fear of God's wrath, but hath a lively hope of his favour and love. This is expressed by the apostle, Heb. 12:23 when he reckons among the privileges of believers, that they are come to God, &c. The apprehensions of God as the righteous Judge of the world, strike the guilty creature with dread and terror; but is sweetened by Christ the Mediator, we may approach unto him with a humble and holy confidence.

5. We must lay hold on this sacrifice, if we would be saved. This is the only sacrifice that satisfied offended justice, and no other could do it.

Therefore we must have recourse to this, if we would have peace with God. Under the law the people were to be sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice; and so must we be with the blood of Christ. It is said, *Exod. 24:8* that 'Moses took the blood of the covenant, and sprinkled it on the people.' This signified the sprinkling of their consciences with the blood of Christ, and their obtaining redemption, justification, and access to God, through it alone. Hence our Saviour is described by this part of his office, *Isa. 52:15*. 'He shall sprinkle many nations.' Our guilt cannot but look upon God as a consuming fire, without a propitiatory sacrifice. All our services are lame and defective, impure and imperfect, so that they will rather provoke God's justice, than merit his mercy. We must therefore have something to put a stop to a just fury, expiate an infinite guilt, and perfume our unsavoury services, and render them acceptable to a holy and righteous God; and that is only the sacrifice of Christ. This is full of all necessary virtue to save us: but the blood of it must be sprinkled upon our souls by faith. Without this we shall remain in our sins, under the wrath of God, and exposed to the sword of divine justice; and our misery will be heightened by our having the offers of Christ and his grace. O! it is a fearful thing for men to have this sacrifice pleading against them, and this precious blood crying for vengeance from heaven upon them; as innocent Abel's blood cried to heaven for vengeance against the unnatural cruelty of his wicked and inhumane brother.

6. Hence see that God will never seek satisfaction for sin from those that are in Christ Jesus. He gave full and complete satisfaction to the law and justice of God for all the wrongs and injuries done thereto by the sins of men, the sufferer being God, and his divine nature stamping an infinite value upon them. Now, if the creditor receives full satisfaction for an offence done, or complete payment of a debt due, by a debtor, from the hands of a surety, neither law nor justice will permit him to ask any further satisfaction or payment from the principal debtor. He can raise no suit or action against the debtor, in regard he has fully satisfied him by the action and deed of his surety. Law and justice are fully satisfied by the obedience and satisfaction

of Christ substituting himself in the room of sinners, and making his soul an offering for them, so as they can crave no more: therefore there can be no condemnation to those that are in him, and have taken the benefit of his satisfaction, and present it to God, as theirs, performed in their room and stead. Hence the apostle says, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' O seek to have your station in Christ, and so you shall be placed beyond the reach of condemnation. You may indeed, though in Christ, suffer chastisements and corrections; yet these are the corrections and chastisements of a Father, not of a Judge; and intended for your good, to cause you forsake sin, and enhance the value of the sacrifice of Christ, and not for satisfaction to justice, whose highest demands have been fully satisfied by the Surety in your room.

7. Hence see the certainty of salvation to, and that God will bestow all the benefits purchased by Christ on, those who believe. Christ has fully satisfied justice for all those whom he represented as a Mediator; so that it has nothing to demand of the Surety, nor of those whose persons he sustained in that undertaking. Hence their salvation is infallibly secured; and justice is bound to accomplish it. Mercy pleads for it; justice fully satisfied cannot dispute the validity of the claim, and cheerfully consents to their acquittal from guilt and condemnation. Thus righteousness and peace kiss each other in the absolution of the guilty sinner that believeth in Jesus.

8. Bless God for the gospel, that discovers unto us this infallible way of being delivered from condemnation and wrath, this sure way to peace and reconciliation with God, this precious balm for a troubled conscience, and this effectual remedy for appeasing an angry God. O prize the gospel, and the precious discoveries thereof, in which all blessings are contained; and accept of a slain Saviour as your only Redeemer from sin and wrath, from hell and condemnation; and glory in his cross, and what he hath done for your redemption and deliverance.

OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION

THE second part of our Lord's priestly office is his interceding for his people, viz. all those for whom he satisfied divine justice. As his intercession is founded upon his making satisfaction to law and justice for their sins, and plainly supposes his having offered himself a sacrifice in their name and stead, so the objects thereof must be the same. As he died only for those for whom he intercedes, so he intercedes for none but such as he shed his precious blood for, as has been shewn in the preceding part of this discourse.

In discoursing further from this point, I shall shew,

1. The different periods of our Lord's intercession.
2. Wherein his intercession consists.
3. The necessity of it.
4. Deduce an inference or two.

First, We may consider the periods of our Lord's intercession. And this may be taken up in a threefold period of time wherein it was made, viz. before his incarnation, during the state of his humiliation, and now in his exalted state.

1. Christ interceded for his church and people before his manifestation in the flesh. Though this office be most eminently performed since the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ, yet it was also effectually performed by him before his assumption of our flesh. He interposed then by virtue of his engagement to make his soul an offering for sin; and he intercedes now by virtue of his actual performance of that engagement. 'As he was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' so by that same reason he was an advocate pleading from the foundation of the

world. It was through the merciful interposition of the Son of God, in consequence of the covenant betwixt the Father and him, that deserved vengeance came not upon the world for sin at the first commission of it. We find him in the Old Testament pleading for the church long before he assumed the human nature, Zech. 1:12. and the saints making use of Christ's name in their prayers to God long before he was born, Dan. 9:17. Thus his intercession began in heaven thousands of years before his abode on earth.

2. He interceded for his people in his state of abasement and humiliation, Heb. 1:7. 'In the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications to God with strong cries and tears.' This manner of intercession was suitable and congruous to his abased state. Though he was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; yet his intercession was not less prevalent with God, for 'he was heard in that he feared.' Ye may see with what majesty and authority he prayed on the behalf of all the elect, John 17:24. 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.' Yea, even when he was under the sharpest agonies, when he was bruised by God, and broken by men, groaning under the wrath of the one, and the wrongs of the other, he forgets not to put up petitions for his crucifiers, Luke 23:34. 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' And many of those who imbrued their hands in his innocent blood, obtained a gracious pardon through his prevalent intercession.

3. He is pleading now for his people in heaven, in his exalted state. When he had offered up himself a sacrifice on the cross, he ascended into the most holy place, and there prosecutes the same suit that he had commenced on the earth. Hence says the apostle, Rom. 8:34. 'It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.'

Secondly, I am to shew wherein Christ's intercession consists.

1. He does not plead for his people in heaven, in such a supplicatory and humble manner as he prayed for them when he was on the earth. He falls not down upon his knees with a deep prostration of soul, lifting up his eyes with tears and strong cries. Such humble prayers and supplications were suited only to the days of his flesh, when he appeared in the form of a servant, and was found in the likeness of man; but they do not become him now in his state of glory, when he is stript of all those natural infirmities and marks of indigence wherewith he was clothed in the world. But, positively,

2. His intercession lies in the following things.

1st, In his appearing in heaven in his people's nature, and on their account. After he had shed his precious blood on the earth for the expiation of their sin, he rose again from the dead, and ascended into heaven as their Advocate and Intercessor, that, by the virtue of his meritorious sacrifice, he might answer all the charges brought in against them, and sue out all the good things that belonged to them, Heb. 9:24. 'Christ is entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.'

2dly, In presenting the memorials of his death and passion as a moving plea on their account. This was typified and prefigured by the high priest's carrying the blood of the sacrifice into the most holy place, and presenting it before the Lord. He was not to go in before the mercy-seat without it; and there was no interceding but by virtue of it. So the whole power and efficacy of Christ's intercession is founded upon his meritorious sufferings. His soul that was bruised and made an offering for sin, and his body that was wounded and broken upon the cross, are daily presented before God, and will remain in the divine presence for ever, as an eternal memorial of his bloody sufferings. This has a powerful efficacy in prevailing with God. Hence, by an usual figure, an interceding voice is attributed to his blood, Heb. 12:24. 'It speaketh better things than that of Abel.' Christ's blood speaks, though not vocally and with oral expressions, yet powerfully and efficaciously. It speaks in the same manner that

Abel's blood did, though not for the same end; this cried for vengeance upon wicked Cain that shed it; but that pleads for mercy and favour to all believing sinners. We have a rare illustration of the efficacious intercession of Christ in heaven, in the famous story of Amyntas, who appeared as an advocate for his brother Æschylus, who was strongly accused, and in great danger of being condemned to die. This Amyntas having performed great services for the state, and merited highly of the commonwealth, in whose service one of his hands was cut off in battle, comes into the court on his brother's behalf, and said nothing, but only lifted up his arm, and shewed them an arm without a hand; which so moved them, that immediately they acquitted his brother. And thus you have Christ represented visionally, Rev. 5:6 as standing between God and us, 'And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders stood a lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.' That is, he was represented as bearing in his glorified body the marks of his death and sacrifice; the wounds which he received for his people's sins on the earth, are as it were still visible and fresh in heaven, as a prevailing argument with the Father to give forth the mercies that he pleads for to them.

3dly, In presenting his will and desire to the Father on their behalf, not in a humble and supplicatory manner, in the way of charity, but by a claim in the way of justice. He now pleads that his people may be put in full possession of all the blessings which were purchased for them by his bloody death. We find him pleading to this purpose immediately before his passion, John 17:24 forecited. He minds the Father as it were of the covenant that was between them both, of his performing the condition required on his part, and so claims the performance of God's promise as a debt due to his meritorious obedience even unto death. He hath 'made his soul an offering for sin;' and therefore pleads that he may 'see his seed, prolong his days,' and that the pleasure of the Lord may prosper in his hands,' Isa. 53:10, 11.

4thly, In his presenting his people's prayers and petitions unto God and pleading that they may be accepted and granted for his sake. Their prayers and religious performances are both impure and imperfect; but his precious merit, applied by his powerful intercession, purifies and perfects them. This skilful Advocate puts them into form and language suited to the methods of the court of heaven, and by his great interest there procures them a speedy hearing. This was excellently typified by the high priest's going in before the Lord with the blood of the sacrifice, and his hands full of incense. After he had offered the sacrifice, without, he was to take his hands full of those aromatic drugs of which the incense was composed, without the vail, and put them in a censor of gold full of fire, and cover the mercy-seat with the fumes of it. This was a figure of Christ's intercession and offering up his people's sacrifices to God. He is the alone altar upon which our sacrifices must ascend before the Lord with a grateful fume: the incense of his merit must be added to our prayers, to make them ascend before the mercy-seat as a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour. Hence he is represented, Rev. 8:3, as an angel standing at the golden altar which was before the throne, with a golden censor in his hand, offering up the prayers of all the saints, perfuming them with the incense that was given him. By the much incense mentioned here, we are to understand the mighty quantity of merit and the great power of his intercession, which was a sweet savour to all his people's sacrifices, and renders them acceptable to God.

5thly, In his answering all the bills of indictment which are brought in against them. Many times a believer is brought in as an arraigned criminal before the divine tribunal, where Satan appears as the accuser, brings in the charge of sin, pleads the righteousness of the law, solicits for judgment upon his accusations, and for the execution of the curse due to the crime. The justice of God calls for vengeance, and conscience thunders out nothing but hell and wrath. Now, while the believer is in these dismal circumstances, Christ steps in and answers the charge. He pleads the efficacy of his merit against the greatness of the believing sinner's crimes, and his satisfaction to

justice by the death of the cross against all the demands and challenges of the law. And thus the sentence of condemnation due unto the sinner for his sin is averted, and a sentence of absolution is pronounced, upon the merit and plea of this powerful Intercessor. Hence we find the apostle glorying in this, Rom. 8:33, 34. '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, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.' Satan may accuse believers; but Christ can soon silence him. Thus, when Joshua the high priest stood before the Lord in filthy garments, Satan stood at his right hand to accuse him; but the angel, namely, the angel of the covenant, Jesus Christ, interposed, saying, 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan,' Zech. 3:1, 2. Though their garments be filthy, yet Christ can take them away, and clothe them with change of raiment. Though Satan be always ready to resist them, yet Christ stands always at the right-hand of God in heaven, to plead for them, and silence Satan.

Thirdly, I shall shew some of the grounds or reasons of our High Priest's intercession.

1. Christ intercedes for his people, because he had a commission, a call, and command from the Father, for this purpose. Is. 42:6. 'I the Lord have called thee in righteousness.' So far was our mighty intercessor from engaging in this service as an intruder or usurper, that he entered upon it under the warrant of Heaven's commission. The Lord called him to be a priest. For verily 'he glorified not himself, to be made an High priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee,' Heb. 5:5. And as the Lord called him to be a priest, so to all the acts of the priestly office. He called him to make his soul an offering for sin, to pour out his life unto death, and to shed his blood for the satisfaction of offended justice. In a word, he called him to make intercession for transgressors. For says the Lord, 'I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me.'

2. He intercedes for his people, because they were given him for this end, John 17:6. 'Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.' The elect that the Father gave to Christ were his own three ways. They were creatures, and therefore their life and being were derived from him. They were criminals, and therefore their life and being were forfeited to him. They were chosen, and therefore their living and being were designed for him. They were given to Christ that the election of grace might not be frustrated, that none of the little ones might perish. Yea they were given him, that the undertaking of Christ might not be fruitless; for they were given him as his seed, in whom he should see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied, and consequently might not spend his strength and shed his blood in vain. Now, because the elect were thus given to Christ, therefore he intercedes for them, John 17:9, 'I pray for them: I pray not for the world but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine.'

3. He intercedes for his people, because it is a special part of his priestly office to do so. As the high priest under the law was not only to slay and offer the sacrifice in the outer part of the tabernacle, on the anniversary day of expiation, but to enter with the fresh blood into the sanctuary, and sprinkle it seven times; and not only so, but was to bring a censor full of burning coals off the altar, with incense in his hands, to be put upon the fire before the Lord within the vail, that so the cloud in the incense might cover the mercy-seat: in like manner, after our great High Priest had offered himself a sacrifice to God in his bloody death, he entered into heaven, not only with his blood, but with the incense of his prayers, as a cloud about the mercy-seat, to preserve by his life the salvation which he had purchased by his death. Hence the apostle assures us, that our salvation depends upon his intercession, and his intercession upon his priesthood, Heb. 7:24, 25. 'This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.'

4. He intercedes for his people, because he was their propitiation; for the efficacy of his plea depends upon the value and virtue of his sacrifice. As the high priest under the law could not enter into the holy of holies, till by the slaying of the sacrifice he had blood to carry with him: so no more could our Priest be admitted to solicit at the throne of grace, till by his death he had satisfied the tribunal of justice. Thus, because he paid the debt as our Surety, he is fit to plead the payment as our Attorney. What he finished on earth, he continually presents in heaven. By shedding his blood he made expiation, and by presenting it he makes intercession. In the one he prepared the remedy, and in the other he applies it.

5. He intercedes for his people, because his doing so is one of the great ends of his ascension and session at the right hand of God. In his incarnation he came down from the Father to acquaint us with his gracious purposes, and how far he had agreed with God in our behalf; and at his ascension he went from us to the Father, to sue out the benefits which he had so dearly purchased. He drew up an answer upon the cross to the bill that sin, by virtue of the law, had drawn against us, and ascended to heaven as an Advocate to plead that answer upon his throne, and to rejoin to all the replies against it. And therefore the apostle tells us, that he is 'entered into heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us,' Heb. 9:24.

6. He intercedes for his people, because of that matchless and amazing love which he bears to them. He loves them with a love infinitely transcending the reach of human or angelic conception; he loves them with a love that knows neither height nor depth, breadth nor length, but is absolutely incomprehensible. His love to them brought him down from heaven, and made him willingly undergo all those sorrows and sufferings, which like impetuous torrents poured in upon him. And certainly, seeing in his love and in his pity he purchased eternal redemption for them, he will never cease to plead for the application of it to them. Seeing in such plentiful streams he shed his precious blood to save them, it is not to be imagined that he will spare his prayers for them.

7. He intercedes for his people, because this service of love is that wherein he takes the greatest delight and pleasure. Before time existed, his delights were with the sons of men; and when the fulness of time did dawn, he said, 'Lo, I come,' &c. He had a delight to live with the sons of men, and to die for them. And no sooner does he enter heaven after his death and resurrection, but there he delights to act on their account, to plead their cause, and to intercede for all the blessings of his purchase to them. This is the will of the Father, and he delights to do it.

I conclude all with an inference or two.

1. How wonderful is the love of God in appointing an Intercessor for us, not an angel, but his own beloved Son! Were we left to ourselves, and to our own pleas, our least sins would ruin us, and all the grounds of intercession we could plead upon would be rejected, as unworthy of acceptance before the throne of God.

2. How wonderful is the love of our Redeemer, in condescending to act so friendly a part to us, notwithstanding all our unworthiness and foul miscarriages against him! How should it fill our hearts with wonder, that he who is our Judge, should take upon him to manage our cause in the court of heaven; that he who has a mouth to condemn us, and wrath to consume us for our sins, should bind the arms of his wrath, and employ his tongue to solicit our cause in the court of heaven; that he who has a mouth to condemn us, and wrath to consume us for our sins, should bind the arms of his wrath, and employ his tongue to solicit our cause and procure us the richest blessings!

3. Then true believers have a friend in the court of heaven, who is agenting their cause, managing their concerns, and will make all things work together for their good. Whatever their cause be, and however fearful they may be about the issue of it, all shall go right at length, through the interest of their mighty Intercessor.

4. Believers cannot finally miscarry, and utterly fall away: for they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Their Redeemer ever liveth to make intercession for them. So that neither their own sins, nor all the temptations of Satan, nor the frowns or allurements of the world, shall ever prevail to make them fall from their steadfastness, or from the favour of God: for Christ, as their High Priest, hath died for their sins, and will never intermit his suits to God in their behalf till they be safely brought to glory.

5. Lastly, Employ the Lord Jesus Christ as your High Priest, to bring you to God, depending on his merit as the ground of the expiation of your guilt, and giving you a title unto eternal life. And make use of him as your Advocate with the Father, to procure you all the blessings you stand in need of for time and eternity.

OF CHRIST'S KINGLY OFFICE

PSALM 2:6.—Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.

THE New Testament leaves us no ground to doubt of our Lord Jesus Christ being the person here spoken of, as several passages in this psalm are expressly therein applied to him. The words contain a direct assertion of Christ's being appointed King of Zion, his spiritual kingdom—Therein we have,

1. His office: He is a King, invested with all regal power and princely authority: being 'King of kings, and Lord of lords;' yea 'the Prince of the kings of the earth.' And this name he hath written on his vesture and on his thigh, Rev. 19:16.

2. His kingdom, over which he rules, the holy hill of Zion; which was an eminent type of the gospel-church, and is called holy, because the temple, the house of God was built upon it.

3. His right to this kingdom; I have sent him my King, says Jehovah. The Father hath placed him in that office, giving him, as God-man, Mediator, 'all power in heaven and in earth.' He is 'given to be Head over all things to the church.'

4. The stability of this kingdom against all attempts made to oppose or destroy it, Yet have I set my King, &c.—Though enemies roar and rage, and leave no means unessayed to hinder the erection and establishment thereof; yet all their plots shall be unsuccessful, and all their deliberations shall miscarry. I have set him as King, and will maintain his throne.

The doctrinal proposition arising from the words is,

DOCT. 'Christ executes the Office of a King.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. That Christ is a King.

II. What sort of a kingdom the kingdom of Christ is.

III. The acts of his kingly office.

IV. The properties of this King.

V. Lastly, Deduce some inferences for application.

I. I am to shew that our Lord Jesus Christ is a King. This will appear, if ye consider,

1. That he was prophesied of in the Old Testament under this character. Thus old Jacob on his death-bed says of him, Gen. 49:10. 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come.' And says the evangelical prophet, Isa. 11:1, 2, 3. 'There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of

the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord: and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears.'

2. That he was of old promised to his people under this notion: Isa. 9:6, 7. 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. Zech. 9:9, '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 fole of an ass.' Micah 5:2. 'Out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel.' He is called the King by way of eminency, Cant 1:4. 'The King hath brought me into his banqueting-house.' Ezek. 34:24. 'I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them.' That he should be a King, was declared to his mother, by the angel, before his conception in her womb, Luke 1:32, 33. 'He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' And hence he is called 'King of kings, and lord of lords.' Rev. 17:14.

3. That he has all the ensigns of royalty. He has a sword: hence it is said, Psal. 45:3. 'Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou Most Mighty.' By this we are to understand the word of God, which is the great instrument by which he maintains and propagates the glory and honour of his kingdom in the world.—A sceptre, which is another badge of royal majesty, Heb. 1:8. 'A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.' By this we are to understand his Spirit, which he puts forth in the government of the world, and in his

operations of grace in the hearts of his people, guiding and conforming them, through his word and ordinances, to the holy will of God.—A crown: It is said, Rev. 6:2 that 'a crown was given him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer.' And we read of a crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, Cant. 3:11.—An escutcheon or coat of arms: He bears the lion in his arms; hence called 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah,' Rev. 5:5; which imports that he should be a great conqueror and a victorious King.—A throne, Heb. 1:8. 'Thy throne O God, is for ever and ever.—Subjects, over whom he rules, even all the creatures in heaven and in earth, Psal. 2:9. 'His kingdom ruleth over all,' Psal. 103:19. All the angels of heaven have taken the oath of allegiance to him, Heb. 1:6. 'Let all the angels of God worship him.' More especially he rules in the church. God the Father has set the crown on his head, and he holds it by immediate tenure from Heaven.—He enacts laws, which all his subjects are bound to obey. His laws are contained in his word, and they reach both the outward and the inward man.

4. That he sealed this truth with his precious blood.—When Pilate asked him, 'Art thou a King then?' he answered, 'Thou sayest that I am a King.' To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world. On this account it is said of him, that 'before Pontius Pilate he witnessed a good confession,' 1 Tim. 6:13.

From all which it is evident, that our Lord Jesus is a King. Yea, he is King of kings, and hath a pre-eminence over them all; and therefore he is called 'the Prince of the kings of the earth.' And indeed he must needs be so; for it is by him that kings reign and princes decree justice.—They all hold their crowns by immediate tenure from this great King. And he infinitely outvies them all; having the highest throne, the largest dominions, and the longest possession.

II. I proceed to shew the nature of Christ's kingdom, or what sort of a kingdom it is. Christ has a twofold kingdom.

1. An essential kingdom. He is Lord and King over all the creatures by nature, inasmuch as he is the eternal Son of God, equal with his Father in all things. In this respect he has a universal empire, which extends over all things in heaven and earth, yea and to hell itself. He is the sole Monarch of the whole world; and all the princes and potentates of the earth are but his vicegerents that govern under, and should rule for him. He is 'the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords,' as the apostle styles him, 1 Tim. 6:15.

2. He has an economical or Mediatory kingdom. Originally the kingdom belongs to him as God, and derivatively it belongs to him as God-man and Mediator. He is constituted King by divine appointment and institution, I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. He is invested with authority over all the creatures; hence it is said, Eph. 1:22. 'God hath put all things under his feet.' He rules from sea to sea, and to the ends of all the earth, yea to the utmost bounds of God's creation. 'He hath given him power over all flesh,' as this King himself says, John 17:2. All things are subject to his government, and ready to fulfil his pleasure, when he issues his word of command.

The church is his peculiar and special kingdom. God 'hath given him to be head over all things to the church,' Eph. 1:22. This kingdom is a spiritual kingdom: hence he says, 'My kingdom is not of this world,' John 18:36. The king thereof appeared not in worldly pomp and grandeur, attended with a splendid equipage, surrounded with armed guards, or having a brilliant and magnificent court, but in spiritual splendor, suited to the nature of his kingdom, Zech. 9:9 forecited. His throne is in the heavens, not on earth, Psal. 110:1. His sceptre is a spiritual one, the word of God, which he wields for the good of his people; it is the rod of his strength, which he sends out of Zion, and by the instrumentality of it he makes them willing in the day of his power, Ps. 110:2, 3. Compare Isa. 2:3. 'Out of Zion shall go forth a law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' The subjects of this kingdom are spiritual men, born of God, begotten of the word of truth, the incorruptible seed of the word, John 1:12. The way of its

administration is spiritual, reaching neither men's bodies nor purses, but their consciences; 'the weapons' of it 'not being carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds,' 2 Cor. 10:4. Its laws are spiritual, reaching the innermost parts of the heart; and the benefits of it are spiritual, righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost,' &c.

The administration of his government with respect to this kingdom is either external or internal.

1, It is external; and that again is either more general, or more particular. (1.) More general, in the course of his providence. He as Mediator has a providential influence on all the affairs of this world, ordering and determining them to the special benefit and interest of his people. Hence it is that all things work together for the good of those who love God. We have an admirable scheme of divine providence in Ezek. 1. There you may see how all the wheels, i. e. motions and revolutions here in this inferior world, are guided and directed by the Spirit that is in them; and in verse 26 it is all run up into the supreme cause: there you find one like the Son of Man, which is Jesus Christ, sitting upon the throne, and giving forth orders for the government of all. (2.) It is more particular, in his appointing laws, ordinances, and officers, in his church, to manage and govern it, and to inflict censures upon scandalous offenders.

2. It is internal, in the hearts of his people. He subdues them to himself in a day of power, writes his laws upon their hearts, and rules and governs them. In this respect it is said, Luke 17:21. 'The kingdom of God is within you.' There he sits enthroned King, and sways his royal sceptre. But more of this anon.

III. The acts of Christ's kingly office may be reduced to these heads, viz. subduing sinners to himself, ruling and governing them, defending and protecting them, restraining his own and their enemies, and conquering them. Of each of these I shall treat in order.

First, Christ exercises his kingly office in subduing a people to himself, making them willing in the day of his power to submit to his authority and sceptre, Psal. 110:3 and so subjecting them to him as willing subjects. For this end consider,

1. That the great design of Christ's kingly office as Mediator is to raise up to himself a kingdom in the bowels of the kingdoms of the earth, Acts 15:14 and to make the subjects of men the subjects of the divine Mediator. So that those who will not allow a spiritual kingdom within a temporal one, refuse Christ to be King.

2. Our Lord has a right to this kingdom, having purchased it with his blood, Acts 20:28. He comes not without a title to conquer, but has the title of his Father's gift and his own purchase. Ere he could attain to the possession of this kingdom, he behoved to swim through a sea of bloody sufferings, and he purchased every subject with the immense price of his precious blood. Thus his title is indefeasible.

3. Though our Lord has this just right to the kingdom, yet his subjects have sworn allegiance to the Prince of darkness, and are in actual rebellion against him. That is the common character of them, which we have Tit. 3:3. 'We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.' And they will never yield to him, till they be overcome by his mighty power. He gets no subjects but by stroke of sword, and the exertion of the same power that was put forth in his own resurrection.

4. Christ as a King doth by power overcome them at length, and makes them willingly submit to him, renounce obedience to the devil, the world, and their own base lusts, his enemies, and causes them cheerfully stoop to the yoke of his obedience, and to say, as Isa. 26:13. 'O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.'

5. The weapons wherewith Christ subdues his subjects are his word and Spirit, whereby they are effectually convinced of their sin and rebellion, and reduced to subjection to him. The word is the rod of his power, by which he has subdued nations to himself. It was by this word that in the primitive times he overturned the empire of the devil, silenced the heathen oracles, and demolished the Pagan idolatrous worship. And because the word comes to many without the Spirit, therefore Christ has many subjects in appearance only, mere pretenders to loyalty to him; they are really the subjects of Satan, and only feign submission to Zion's King. But where the Spirit comes with the word, there the heart is subjected to Christ in very deed, 2 Cor. 10:4; and Christ has a kingdom not only among them, but within them.

Secondly, Christ exercises his kingly office in ruling and governing his subjects. No kingdom can be without a government; and Christ's kingdom must needs be an orderly kingdom, which he himself governs as the supreme Head and Monarch. Now,

1. Forasmuch as the church is a visible society on earth, whose head is in heaven, Christ governs them externally.

(1.) Giving them laws according to which they are to demean themselves every way towards God and towards their neighbour, Isa. 33:22. 'The Lord is our Lawgiver.' Those laws which are the laws of the kingdom of Christ, are written in the Bible, and are a transcript of his perfections, and derive all their authority and vigour from him alone, and not from the church, or any body of men whatever. And none have power to add to or diminish from the laws of this great King.

(2.) He gives them officers in whose hands he has lodged this government who are to be accountable to him for their administration, on whom they depend, and from whom they derive their power. These are neither Pope nor prelates, none of these being officers of Christ's appointment; nor yet the civil magistrate, who as

such is not so much as a member of the church; and while there were no magistrates but what were enemies to the church and the cause of Christ, yet Christ appointed a government therein; as appears from 1 Cor. 12:28. 'God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.' But these officers are preaching and ruling elders; as is clear from what the apostle says, 1 Tim. 5:17. 'Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.'

(3.) He gives discipline and censures to controul the unruly, and check the scandalous, and keep the society clean; to which all that own Christ as a King ought to be subject, who rules his people by church discipline, as well as teaches them by the ministry of men. This appears from what our Lord himself says, Mat. 18:17, 18. 'If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.'

2. But seeing Christ is God, and his laws reach the inner man, which lies open to no other but himself, he governs his people internally.

(1.) Writing his law in their hearts, in consequence of the divine promise, Heb. 8:10 holding forth their duty to them by an inward evidence, making them to know what his will and pleasure is, that they may obey it from the heart. Hence he says, Isa. 30:21, 'Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.'

(2.) He powerfully inclines and over-rules them by his Spirit unto obedience, while he sits at the helm, and steers the ship of the soul what way he will, Acts 20:22. To which we may add,

(3.) Those secret rewards and corrections which are sent from his own hand; while he bestows on them spiritual comforts and soul-feasts when in the way of their duty, and gives them such strokes for their correction, even for secret faults, as may let them see, that though their King be in heaven, yet he judges on the earth. Hence he says to the church of Pergamos, Rev. 2:17. 'To him that over-cometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.' And to the church of the Laodiceans he says, Rev. 3:19. 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.'

Thirdly, Christ executes his kingly office in defending his people. The kingdom of Christ always had and ever will have many enemies, who will continually be within bow-shot of its subjects. These enemies are the devil, the flesh, the world, and death. Christ defends against these, as a king defends his subjects.

1. By preserving his church in being, notwithstanding all the cunning and furious attempts to destroy her. Hence the bush, though it burn, will not consume. Of her lie says, Isa. 27:3. 'I the Lord do keep it: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.' And he keeps every particular believer, so as they never totally and finally fall away, John 10:28. 'I give unto them eternal life (says he): and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.'

2. By giving them necessary support and help under all sufferings, troubles, and temptations, never leaving them, no not at the hour of death. Hence it is said, Isa. 63:9. 'In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.' 1 Cor. 10:13. 'There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' For this he makes use of the angels as he will, they being 'all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs

of salvation,' Heb. 1:14. And he can employ men, even the worst of men, in that service: hence the earth helped the woman, and opened her month, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth, Rev. 12:16.

Fourthly, Christ executes his kingly office in restraining his enemies, and those of his people. While, though their power remains with them to annoy his people, yet he sets bounds to them, over which they cannot pass; Psal. 76:10. 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee (says the Psalmist): the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.'—Christ has all his and his people's enemies, outward and inward, in a chain: and no further can they go than he is pleased to let out a link to them. If it were not so, all would quickly be over-run; but one jot they cannot go beyond his permission.

Fifthly and lastly, Christ executes his kingly office in conquering his enemies, and those of his people. This conquest is twofold. (1.) When now he takes away their power in part. Thus is the devil conquered already, that he has not all the world so at his will, and under his yoke of slavery, as before the coming of Christ, when he ruled among the nations with an unlimited sway. And thus the devil and the flesh are conquered in the day of converting grace, when the power of these enemies is broken, and the captives are delivered from the tyranny and bondage in which they were formerly held. Thus the wicked world is conquered, when their rage against the people of God is laid aside, and the church enjoys tranquillity: 'For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her, Zech. 2:5. And death is conquered when its sting is taken away, which it is as to every believer; so that they can say, 'O death, where is thy sting?' 1 Cor. 15:55. (2.) There is a complete conquest remaining, which will be at the last day, when Christ will gather in all his people into one glorious company, transport them into those mansions of bliss which he has prepared for them, and reign over them for ever in heaven: when all his own, and his people's enemies are utterly destroyed from the presence of God, and the glory of his power. 'For he must reign till all his enemies be put

under his feet,' 1 Cor. 15:25. Then death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire, Rev. 20:14 and the devil and all his slaves shall be shut up for ever in the infernal Tophet. This shall be the most signal display of the glorious conquests of this King, and the trophies of his victory shall be the subject of the song of the redeemed for ever.

This kingdom of Christ will be eternal, Luke 1:33. 'He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' Dan. 2:44. 'The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed,—and it shall stand for ever.' It is true the way of its present administration will cease, and so he will deliver up the kingdom to his Father, but exhibiting it as consummated and perfected. But Christ shall remain the King, Head, and Husband of his church for ever, Rev. 19:7 and he shall be the eternal bond of union betwixt God and the saints.

IV. Let us consider some of the properties or qualities of Zion's King.

1. He is a King of ancient, glorious, and honourable extract: for he is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. His goings forth were of old, from everlasting. And he is God over all, blessed for ever.

2. He is an absolute king, who makes laws for his subjects, but is not bound by any himself. His will is his law, and he does without controul whatever seems good to himself in heaven and in earth. Yea, so uncontrollable is his government, that none may oblige him to render a reason of his actions. 'Who may say unto him, What dost thou?' But though Christ be an absolute monarch, yet his government is no way tyrannical, but managed according to the eternal rules of righteousness, justice, and holiness.

3. He is a wise King: for he is the wisdom of God, yea, God only wise; and therefore infinitely able to guide his subjects through all the labyrinths of danger and difficulty wherein they may be involved; while he 'teaches them in the way of wisdom, and leads them in right

paths; so that when they go, their steps shall not be straitened: and when they run, they shall not stumble,' Prov. 4:11, 12.

4. Christ is a very powerful King: for he has more than the strength of an unicorn; yea, he has an arm that is full of power, being the Lord of hosts, strong and mighty in battle; and therefore infinitely able to secure his subjects against all the attempts which devils or men can make against them. Yea, so great is his strength, and so mighty is his power, that one angry blast thereof will make all his enemies to fly as chaff before the wind; and therefore he says, 'Who will set the briars and thorns against me in battle; I would go through them, I would burn them up together,' Isa. 27:4.

5. Christ is a just King: 'Just and right is he.' Though clouds and darkness may be about him, yet 'justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne,' Psal. 97:2. So that his government is impartially exercised, without any by-respect to the great or the small, the rich or the poor, &c. Neither the meanness of the poor and low, nor the honour and greatness of the high and noble, will incline him to do any thing in the least inconsistent with the immutable rules of perfect justice. 'He accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor; for they are all the work of his hands,' Job 34:19.

6. Christ is a very merciful King. Mercy is the prevailing attribute of his nature, which he delights to make the children of men feel the benign effects of. Therefore he has proclaimed himself to be 'the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious.' He does not willingly grieve nor afflict the children of men. He takes no pleasure in the blood of his most implacable and inveterate foes; and bears with a very tender hand upon his afflicted, broken, and discouraged people. For the bruised reed he will not break, nor quench the smoking flax. He heals the broken in heart, and binds up all their wounds. In all the afflictions of his people he is afflicted; and he that touches them, touches the apple of his eye.

7. Christ is a very meek and patient King. Never any in the world could have borne such indignities, or digested such affronts, as he has met with from such of his own subjects, to whom he has shewn the most distinguishing kindness. Had he not been thus patient, Judah and Ephraim had soon been unpeopled. 'As for them, they were bent to backsliding: though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him,' Hos. 11:7. Though he sent many prophets unto them, calling upon them, and saying, 'Return, ye backsliding children' &c. yet they did not regard them. Who after this could imagine, that this just and jealous King would have entertained one thought of kindness towards them? yet hear what he says, 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together,' ver. 8.

8. Christ is a very beautiful King. His glory outshines the sun in its full strength. The united constellations of all created beauty fall infinitely short of his; for he is fairer than the children of men, yea, he is altogether lovely.

9. Christ is a most humble and condescending King: for he does not disdain to be acquainted with the meanest among the sons of men; the beggar will be as welcome to him as the prince. The poor and the rich are all one to him; and he takes as much notice of Job on the dunghill, as of David on the throne. Hear what the prophet, in the name of this great King, says, Isa. 66:1, 2. 'Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? for all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.'

10. Christ is a very rich and opulent King. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. He is the heir of all things. Honour and riches are with him, yea, durable riches and righteousness. So that those who

are his honest and faithful subjects shall never want any thing that is good for them. Such are the immense treasures and infinite riches of this glorious King, that all the ministers on earth, and all the angels in heaven, cannot possibly lay them open. For can they grasp the heavens in their arms, and the sun in the hollow of their hands? can they weigh the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Suppose they could do all this, and a thousand times more, yet could they not give an account of the estate of this my King. So that his subjects shall never want either grace or glory.

11. He is an immortal and everlasting King. 'The heavens and the earth shall perish, but he shall endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shall they be changed. But he is the same, and his years shall have no end,' Psal. 102:26, 27. Though the best, the wisest, and the richest kings upon earth will die, and leave their subjects exposed to many inconveniences consequent on their death, yet this King of glory lives for evermore, and will rule over his subjects with justice, mercy, and righteousness, through all the ages of eternity.

It remains to make some improvement of this subject.

1. The kings of the earth have no ground to grudge the kingdom of Christ its freedom in their dominions; seeing it is a spiritual kingdom, and quite of another nature than the kingdoms of this world; and interferes not with any of the just rights and prerogatives of earthly crowns. Yet how sad is it that this kingdom should be an eye-sore to the kings of the earth, and that they should employ their power to suppress and bear it down?

2. The Pope's supremacy, and the supremacy of the magistrate over all persons, and in all causes, whereby they have been made heads of the church, is daring blasphemy against Christ, a bold usurpation of his crown and dignity, and high rebellion against him, who will not suffer the jewels to be stollen from his crown, to deck the head of any

earthly power whatever, without the severest testimony of his resentment.

3. There is a government of the church distinct from and independent upon the civil government, lodged in the hands of church-officers, whereby they have a power, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to meet in judicatories, transact matters there according to the word and laws of this King, to dissolve their meetings in his name, to appoint fasts and thanksgivings, as the state of the church may require, to inflict censures on offenders, bind and loose, and to do every thing necessary for advancing this kingdom in a spiritual way, but no otherwise. And whoever presumes to hinder them in these acts of administration, or arrogate any of them to themselves, are in so far enemies to Christ and his royal prerogatives.

4. This government of the church is not alterable by any power on earth, whether civil or ecclesiastic; nor have they that are entrusted with it any power to give up the rights and privileges conferred on them by Christ to any person or persons whatsoever. If they do so, they are unfaithful to their trust, and their conduct will be highly resented another day.

5. None have power to appoint any parts of worship in the Church that Christ has not appointed. For he is the sole Lawgiver of the church, and has in his word appointed the platform of the worship which he requires of his subjects. And therefore for any to appoint ceremonies and rights of worship which bear not the stamp of his institution, act in opposition to his laws; and all their rites are useless and unprofitable. Equally culpable are those who presume to make any terms of communion, or of admission to the ordinances of the church, but such as Christ has left behind him. This is high rebellion against the King of Zion.

6. The truth of the kingdom of Christ is a solid ground of suffering, on which people may comfortably lose whatever is dear to them in the world, knowing they are in the way of their duty. And this was the

ground of the sufferings of the Lord's people in the persecuting reigns before the Revolution, whose memory ought to be always regarded, for their zealous and firm adherence to the prerogatives of Christ's kingdom.

7. The church shall ride out all the storms that can blow upon her, whether from earth or hell. All plots and contrivances against her shall be defeated in the end; for her King liveth, and will never suffer the gates of hell to prevail against her. The crown shall flourish on his head, when the church's enemies shall be ruined, and their kingdoms laid by for ever.

8. However weak any poor believer be amongst many enemies, yet the broken ship shall surely come to land. The spark of grace shall be preserved amidst an ocean of difficulties and corruptions, within or without. The seed of grace sown in the heart shall be maintained, and spring up in the fruits of holiness. All Christ's honest subjects shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

9. Whoever they be that refuse subjection to the ordinances and discipline of Christ's house, do in so far reject Christ from ruling over them. Consider this, ye that neglect a regular attendance upon the ordinances of divine institution, and will not submit to discipline and censure for your scandalous, and offensive behaviour. Ye are the enemies of Zion's King, and your conduct plainly declares, that ye will not have this man to reign over you. Repent of this your rebellion, otherwise ye shall be slain as his enemies.

10. See, believers, ye that are striving against sin and Satan, and waging war with your lusts and all Christ's enemies, to whom you are to have recourse for help in all your difficulties; even to your Almighty King, who is infinitely able to help you in all straits. Make use of him daily as your King, applying and trusting to him for life, strength, defence, and victory over all your enemies.

11. Lastly, Ye that are strangers to Christ, captives to Satan, and under a miserable thralldom to your own lusts, will ye be persuaded to come under the sceptre and government of King Jesus; take on his yoke, and subject yourselves to him and his blessed government. For motives, consider,

(1.) The great glory and dignity of his person. He is God equal with the Father, the wonder of men and angels. The most glorious monarch that ever swayed sceptre among men, is but like a worm of the earth, or a despicable insect in the air, compared to him. All created excellencies fall under a vail, when his glory begins to shine.

(2.) He has the best right to govern your souls. The devil and your vile lusts are all usurpers. But Christ is your rightful Lord. He has an original right to you as God, and a derivative right as Mediator. He hath an unquestionable title by the grant of the Father, Acts 2:36. 'Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.' And he hath a right by his own merit and purchase, Rom. 14:9. "For this end Christ both died, and rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.' Ye are his, whether ye will or not. Ye are entirely at his disposal. He has more power over you than the potter has over the clay. Your own consent and willingness adds nothing to his title; but it will fearfully aggravate your sin, if ye refuse it.

(3.) Consider the misery of your condition till once ye submit to him. Ye are under a miserable bondage to the devil; ye are slaves to the prince of darkness; that spirit rules in you that worketh in all the children of disobedience. Your condition will grow still worse and worse, till it be incapable of any further addition of misery. Ye are now without God, without the promises of the covenant, without peace, without the pardon of sin, having no communion with God, or title to heaven. Ye are slaves to your sordid lusts, under the curse of the law, and condemned already. Whenever ye die out of Christ, ye shall die in your sins; and he that was your ruler and leader in this world, will be both your companion and tormentor in the world to

come. O fearful condition! Can ye sleep quietly in your chains? When ye hear that Christ was anointed by the Father to preach good tidings to the meek, to proclaim liberty to captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; should not this make you sigh, may cry, through the grates of the prison, to this glorious Deliverer who stands at the door? When ye see Christ's standard pitched in the gospel, and his glorious banner displayed there, will ye not repair to it, and list yourselves among his faithful subjects?

(4.) It is your greatest dignity to be subjects to Christ. Theodosius the Emperor thought it a greater honour to be a servant to Christ, than the head of an empire. Christ's subjects are called vessels of honour, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, &c. They are consecrated, and set apart for God, to be the objects of his special grace, and the instruments of his glory and service in the world. This advanceth them to great dignity and honour. Subject yourselves then to Christ, and ye shall arrive at the highest pinnacle of honour.

(5.) His government is most sweet and pleasant. His yoke is easy, and his burden light. His cross is better than the world's crown. Submit then to his easy sceptre.

(6.) Consider the great happiness that will attend your subjecting yourselves to Christ's government. It is introductive to every privilege, mercy, and blessing, that men can desire. By this ye will be delivered from the vassalage of Satan, the servitude of sin, the malediction of the law, and danger of the wrath to come. Let this prevail on you to submit to this King.

(7.) By this ye will put the crown upon his head, and give him the reward of his bloody death and sufferings, when ye renounce sin and Satan, and all the lusts and idols that exercised dominion over you before, and betake yourselves to him by faith, and give your hearty consent that he shall reign in your souls.

(8.) This is the design of all God's ordinances and dispensations; all the arrows in the gospel-quiver are levelled at this mark; it is the point and centre into which all these blessed lines are drawn. Submit to him, then, and disappoint not the design of all his love and grace to poor sinners.

(9.) Ye can have no saving benefit by Christ, unless ye submit to him as your King. It is through his kingly office that all his other offices are made effectual. All the blessings and benefits of his purchase are conveyed to believers this way. It is by his regal power that he changes their natures, powerfully inclines them to believe on him, and to love and obey him. If ye accept not of him as your King, ye can have no benefit by him at all. Ye must receive him as your Lord, as well as your Prophet and Priest.

(10.) Lastly, If ye will not stoop and bow to him, he will break you in pieces. God has settled an irreversible decree, that 'to him every knee shall bow;' and if they do it not cheerfully and willingly, they shall be made to do it with force and constraint. He has a rod of iron, and therewith he will break in pieces the mightiest potentates of the earth that will not subject themselves to him. Hence we have that counsel given them by the Spirit of God, Psal. 2:10, 11, 12. 'Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in him.'

OF CHRIST'S HUMILIATION

PHILIPPIANS 2:8.—He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

HAVING discoursed of our Redeemer and his incarnation, and the several offices he executes under that character, I come now to treat of his amazing humiliation and abasement, to which he willingly submitted, in order to accomplish the redemption of elect sinners. The text holds forth his state of humiliation.

1. The voluntariness of it: it was no matter of force or compulsion; He voluntarily humbled himself.
2. The nature of it: it was obedience, viz. to the Father's will, which comprehends the whole of what Christ did and suffered for our redemption.
3. The depth of it: it was unto death; and he could go no lower. As for the kind of death, he humbled himself to the basest and most humiliating kind of it, the death of the cross. Under this is comprehended his burial, and continuing for a time under the power of death. Death had our Redeemer as low as it could carry him.
4. The continuance of this humiliation. He had a race thereof set before him, in which he continued till he came to death, as the end of it.

Christ's humiliation was a voluntary thing; he voluntarily did and suffered whatever he did and suffered for us, Psal. 40:7. 'Lo, I come,' said he. Even in the deepest points of his humiliation, 'he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth,' to oppose the humbling treatment he was exposed to. Man fell off from God by his ambition, and therefore was Christ humbled, that he might be recovered again from his misery to the favour of God, and allegiance to him.

In discoursing further from this subject, I shall consider the several parts of our Lord's humiliation, as they are laid down in the Catechism, viz. 'his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; his being buried, and continuing

under the power of death for a time.' What a catalogue of humiliating circumstances is here, to which the Son of God was subjected from the cradle to the grave; the consideration of all which should excite us to hate sin, the fatal cause of all, and to endear to us the merciful Redeemer, who for our sake went through all this scene to accomplish our salvation.

FIRST, The Son of God was born, and that in a low condition. Here is a wide step at first, a step from heaven to earth; which is a mystery of infinite condescension. Take this article in pieces, and behold humiliation in every point. The Son of God was humbled in his incarnation, his conception, his birth, and the circumstances attending it.

1. The Son of God became man. To see a king become a slave, and the order of angels degraded into crawling worms, would be matter of wonder; but a greater is here, viz. God not become an angel, though that would have been infinitely below him, but a man, a son of Adam, taking the likeness of sinful flesh. Hence the apostle cries out with admiration, 1 Tim. 3:16. 'Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh.' O deep humiliation! far greater than if all the creatures had been degraded to the lowest degree of existence.

2. He was conceived in the womb of a sinful woman, the virgin Mary, who, as a daughter of Adam, was certainly infected with original sin as well as the rest of his posterity. O the depth of the Son of God's humiliation! It would have been low, had the great God, the Creator of heaven and earth, purposing to become man, been created as Adam, as it were at once, and in a perfect state of manhood. But to be conceived in the womb of a woman, was yet lower. He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain as God, was as man shut up for the ordinary number of months in the womb of a woman, whom he himself had made. His body was formed not of any substance sent down from heaven, but of her's a creature, Gal. 4:4. He was 'made of a woman;' that is, his body was formed of a part of her substance, being of the seed of David, and of the tribe of Judah. He was born of

a sinful creature, and yet without sin; the Holy Ghost having purified it from all defilement, as God alone can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, though man cannot.

3. He was born of a woman. Had there been no more about him but that he had been born of an empress, a sovereign princess, who made a great figure in the world, it would have been very wonderful: but that he was born of any woman at all, be her rank in life what it will, may well strike us with amazement. I shall say no more of this, but that our birth is such as the due consideration of it might humble us all our life; and yet to it Christ humbled himself. O the depth of his humiliation.

4. He was born in a low condition. There were several circumstances of the lowest abasement about the birth of Christ. He was not born of a great princess, seated on a splendid throne, and attended with a brilliant court, but a mean woman, though of the seed-royal of David, and married not to a mighty potentate, but a poor mechanic, a carpenter, Luke 1:48 and that not in her own house, but in that of another; not in the inn, the great house where the richer and more noble company chuse their lodging, there being no room there for him who was born King of the Jews, yea, who is the Prince of the kings of the earth, but in a stable among cattle; and when born, not clothed with embroidered or costly garments, as the children of kings use to be, but swaddled in tattered clothes, rent pieces of a garment, as the original word signifies; and laid not in a servant's bed in the stable, but in a manger, out of which the cattle eat their provender, instead of a cradle, Luke 2:7. A far lower state of humiliation than most of the sons and daughters of Adam are reduced to. Well may we cry out with astonishment, How low, O Son of God, wast thou humbled in every circumstance relating to thy conception and birth! O that we might study humility from thy low abasement!

SECONDLY, Our Redeemer was made under the law, though he be the Lord of all, and the Lawgiver unto his rational creatures. Rebellious man had shaken off the yoke of his obedience, and Christ

therefore lays his neck under it. He submitted himself to the ceremonial law, undergoing the painful operation of circumcision on the eighth day after his birth, as was therein enjoined; to the civil law paying tribute, &c.; and to the moral law, obeying the precepts thereof, and suffering the penal sanction of it, which was added in case of transgression by man, in whose room he substituted himself.

1. He submitted to the preceptive part of the law as a covenant of works, which man had broken: and this he fulfilled, so that he was even subject to Joseph his supposed father, and to Mary his Mother, according to the flesh, Luke 2:51.; nay, to every branch of it, in fulfilling all righteousness, Matth. 3:15. By this his obedience the law was magnified and made honourable, and got its full due in respect of active obedience, which it could never have got from men, though all their pieces of obedience had been accumulated into one sum.

2. He submitted to the threatening or penal sanction of the law. Though there was no guile found in his mouth, and he owed the law nothing, as being the great Lawgiver, yet the law took him by the throat, as the undertaker for sinners, saying, 'Pay me what thou owest.' The threatening was enacted, and he answered it to a tittle, bearing that death in his soul and body which it had threatened on account of sin. And thus he took on the debt of elect sinners, and he paid it to the utmost farthing. O wonderful condescension in the Lord and Lawgiver, to yield obedience to his own law, that was made for creatures, in all its demands, the most rigorous not excepted? O blessed Undertaker, who hast paid all the debt of bankrupt men!

THIRDLY, He underwent the miseries of this life, which was infected with the plague of sin, and thereby rendered very grievous to bear; and yet he, though sinless, humbled himself to bear the tokens thereof. As,

1. Poverty: 'Though the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, yet he, the Son of man, had not where to lay his head.' Adam had reduced all his posterity to beggary, and Christ submitted to the

poverty following it; not having wherewith to maintain himself, but receiving supplies from some women who ministered to him of their substance. He was so poor that he had not wherewith to pay the tribute exacted of him till he wrought a miracle for it. In his greatest state, and when attended with the grandest cavalcade, he was mounted, not on a horse finely caparisoned, but on a silly ass, and that none of his own, but borrowed from another.

2. Sorrow: Isa. 53:3. He was 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' There was a constant cloud of sorrow on him. Once we read of his rejoicing in spirit, but never of his laughing; frequently of his complaints, tears, and groans. He was content to sorrow for us, that we might rejoice, and to weep that we might be glad.

3. The indignities of the world, in the contempt, reproach, and despite poured upon him. He was despised and rejected of men. Hence he says of himself in this respect, Psal. 22:6. 'I am a worm and no man: a reproach of men, and despised of the people.' He was contradicted of sinners, called Beelzebub, a madman, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, &c.

4. The temptations of Satan. He was tempted of the devil forty days in the wilderness and elsewhere: may tempted to self-murder, and to the worship of that damned spirit, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. And Satan seems to have often set upon him, though the particular times are not mentioned in the sacred records; as appears from Luke 4:13 where it is said, that 'the devil departed from him (after his grand temptation) for a season;' denoting that he would attack him again.

Lastly, The sinless infirmities of human nature. He was subjected to weariness, hunger, thirst, &c. as the history of his life in the evangelists abundantly declares. Thus low was the Son of God humbled on account of sinners, that they might not perish for ever. O let us admire his humiliation and abasement, and let his low estate

for ever hide pride from our eyes, and teach us, in whatever state we are, therewith to be content.

FOURTHLY, He underwent the wrath of God. Thus he humbled himself to drink the bitter dregs of his Father's wrath for us. The curse of the law was laid upon him, and he bore it for us, Gal. 3:13. His soul was troubled, John 12:27. He was beset with sorrows of the deepest sort, when he said, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,' Matth. 26:38. He was in an agony, so as it made him sweat great drops of blood, that trickled from his blessed body in a cold night in the open air. Whence was all this but from the load of his Father's wrath that lay on him, on account of all the sins of his elect people imputed to him? a load, which, if laid on all the angels in heaven and men on earth, would have sunk them to the lowest hell. Compare the martyrs quietly bearing the most fearful deaths. They were supported by divine consolations flowing into their souls, without one drop of God's wrath in the cup given them to drink. But from him all divine comforts were withheld. See that desertion of God of which he so bitterly cried out on the cross, when there was an eclipse of comfort from his holy soul, as there was of the sun in his cheering beams from the earth, that he might bear that wrath in full measure. O what an amazing step of humiliation was this! Who knows the power of the Lord's wrath? If fatherly anger made David to roar, and vindictive justice devils to tremble under the fearful apprehensions of the wrath to come upon them, how dreadful behoved that wrath to be which was due to the sins of all the elect, when accumulated in one sum, and all charged upon Christ at once? He was set up as a mark against which all the arrows of the divine wrath were levelled; the quiver thereof was emptied upon him. No wonder then that he was in agony, that blood trickled from every pore of his body, and that his holy human soul recoiled, as it were, from the terrible shock it underwent under this load of wrath and the curse of the law.

FIFTHLY, He underwent the cursed death of the cross. Being betrayed by Judas, forsaken by all his disciples, denied by the self-

confident Peter, and condemned by Pilate, he was put to death on the cross. This death of Christ was,

1. Most painful. No death is without pain. But his death was most painful: for 'it pleased the Lord to bruise him.' Consider here,

(1.) Our Lord was scourged, having his blessed back beaten with sharp rods, Matt. 27:26 which was a most shameful and painful thing.

(2.) He was crowned with thorns; and the mad soldiers struck him on the head, when this prickly crown was on his head, thereby driving the thorns into it, and making them penetrate the deeper, Matt. 27:29, 30 whereby it seems he was so overspread with his own blood, that Pilate thought him already an object of commiseration, and brought him forth to the Jews, saying 'Behold the man,' John 19:5. Add to this what he suffered from blows and cuffs laid on him without mercy, and their compelling him to bear his own cross, till, fainting with the heavy load and his inward sufferings, they obliged another to drag it to the place of execution.

(3.) He was crucified; which was a most painful and excruciating death. For consider,

[1.] The extending of his body on the cross, which lying on the ground, his body was with such force stretched out its full length, that his bones were drawn out of joint, as he himself pathetically expresses it in prophetic language, long before the tragical event took place, Psal. 22:14. 'My bones are out of joint,' His sinews were distended, and his bones dislocated by the violent distension.

[2.] The nailing of the body so extended unto the cross. These nails were driven through the hands and the feet, the sinewy and most sensible parts of the body; which could not but occasion greater pain to Christ's body, which was of a finer temperature and more acute feeling than the bodies of other men, as being entirely exempted from the corruption and distempers these are liable to. And great

indeed it seems they were; for he says, 'they pierced my hands and feet;' in Hebrew they digged them, as it were with spades and mattocks, which could not but occasion the most excruciating and acute pain.

[3.] What dreadful pain behoved the lifting up of the cross, with him nailed to it, be to his blessed body, especially if done with a sudden jerk, which we may suppose to have been probably the case, considering the eagerness of his enemies to have him dispatched; and then thrusting it down again into the ground that it might stand upright, attended no doubt with shaking from side to side? Every one may well perceive what dreadful pain must have attended all this horrid scene.

[4.] It was a longsome or lingering death. He hung on the cross about six hours, from nine in the morning till three in the afternoon, Mark 15:25, 34. What pain behoved to attend such a long suspension on the cross, his blessed body hanging all the while by his hands nailed to the upper part?

2. His death was most shameful and ignominious, Heb. 12:2. 'He endured the cross, despising the shame.' Much shame was cast upon him. They spit upon him, and mocked him. The death of the cross was a death for bondmen, seldom for freemen, and those only of the baser sort, and for some of the highest Crimean. While he was a-dying he stood naked on the cross; for they that were crucified were first stript naked of all their clothes, Matt. 27:35. He was crucified in the midst of two thieves, as if he had been the chief of them, and that without the gate, as the blasphemer was without the camp. They wagged their heads at him. He was mocked in his prophetic office: they blindfolded him, and bad him 'prophecy who smote him.' He was mocked in his priestly office, 'He saved others, but himself he cannot save.' And he was mocked in his kingly office; they cried unto him, 'Hail, King of the Jews;' and this title, 'This is Jesus the King of the Jews,' was inscribed on his cross, as giving him out for a mock monarch.

3. It was a cursed death, Deut. 21:23. 'He that is hanged, is accursed of God.' That was but a ceremonial curse, but it was a real one to him, Gal. 3:13. 'He was made a curse for us.' There were many other kinds of death among the Jews; but that kind only was accursed: and therefore it behoved Christ our Surety so to die. It is thought this crucifying of criminals was forbidden in the time of the Emperor Constantine.

SIXTHLY, He was buried, so that there might be full assurance given of his death, upon the reality of which the hopes and happiness of his people depend, in as much as thereby transgression was finished, an end put to sin, reconciliation made for iniquity, and everlasting righteousness brought in. He was buried too, that he might conquer death in its darkest and strongest hold, even in the gloomy recesses of the grave: to sanctify and sweeten it to all his friends and followers, that it may be to them a place of repose, where their bodies may rest till the resurrection; that his people may have power and strength to bury sin, so as it may never rise up against them to their condemnation; and to teach his followers to give one another's dead bodies a just and decent interment.

The persons who concerned themselves in our Lord's funeral, were Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, John 19:38–42. They were rich men, senators, and counsellors in the Jewish state, and of as bright and distinguished characters as any who sat in the sanhedrim; and yet they were so far from reckoning it a dishonour, that they counted it a piece of singular glory to be employed in this last act of kindness to their dead Lord. Now, when the apostles were all fled, and none of them appeared to shew this respect to their Master, Providence stirred up these two great and rich men to act a part upon this occasion which was truly great and honourable. And those persons were well affected to our Redeemer. Though the weakness of their faith moved them to conceal their profession during his life, yet now, when he is dead, and none of all his followers have the courage to own or concern themselves about him, they boldly appear in acting this part of sincere friends to him.

The place where our Lord was buried was a new sepulchre in a garden, wherein no man had ever been laid, John 19:41. Thus our Lord was buried not in his own, but in another man's grave. As in the days of his life he was in such circumstances, that he himself said, 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has not where to lay his head;' so when he was dead he had no grave of his own to be laid in. When he was born, he was born in another man's house; when he preached, he preached in another man's ship; when he prayed, he prayed in another man's garden; when he rode to Jerusalem, he rode on another man's ass; and when he was buried, he was buried in another man's grave. He had nothing peculiar to himself but his cross; which no man would touch, far less take from him, even when he was ready to faint under the weight of it, till Simon of Cyrene was compelled to bear it. The grave belonged to Joseph of Arimathea, who was a rich man; and thus there was a memorable fulfilment of that prophecy, Isa. 53:9. 'He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.' Though upon the cross he was insulted and despised, yet he was honourably laid in the grave. It was a new grave; which a wise Providence so ordered, that the Jews might have no ground to surmise, either that some other buried before had risen, or that his resurrection was not the effect of his own power, but of virtue flowing from the body of some saint formerly interred there, as in the case of that dead man, who being let down into the grave of Elisha, and touching his bones, revived, and stood up on his feet, 2 Kings 13:21. This grave was in a garden; which Joseph contrived to have so, that it might be a memorandum to him, while living amidst all the pleasures and products of this garden, to think of death, and to be diligent in preparing for it. In a sepulchre in a garden Christ's body was laid. In the garden of Eden death and the grave received their power, and now in a garden are conquered, disarmed, and triumphed over. In a garden Christ began his passion, and in a garden he would rise and begin his exaltation. Christ fell to the ground as a corn of wheat, John 12:24 and therefore was sown in a garden among the seeds, for his dew is as the dew of herbs, Isa. 26:19; yea, he is the fountain of gardens, Cant. 4:15.

As to the manner of our Lord's funeral, several things may be observed.

1. Joseph, inspired with an undaunted courage, went to Pilate, and boldly asked the dead body of Jesus. Though while our Redeemer lived, Joseph was so far sunk under the power of fear and cowardice, that he acted only as his secret disciple, yet now when he is dead, holy boldness and courage rose to such a pitch in his spirit, that he openly asked his body of Pilate, in order to a decent interment. Though he might have formed a party to have carried it off by violence, yet he rather chose to do it in a regular and peaceable manner; and therefore made a dutiful application to Pilate, who was the proper person to be addressed on this occasion, in regard he had the disposal of the body. In things wherein the power of the civil magistrate is concerned, due regard must be had to that power, and nothing done to break in upon it.

2. Upon this application, Pilate very readily granted Joseph the body of Jesus, in order to its being decently interred. Perhaps by this step he imagined to do something towards atoning that guilt wherewith his conscience charged him in condemning an innocent person. But whatever might be in this, it is certain, that, in Joseph's petition and Pilate's ready grant of it, honour was done to Christ, and a testimony borne to his integrity.

3. Joseph having obtained his desire, instantly repaired to the accursed tree, from which he took down the body of Jesus; and mangled and mascerated as it was, carried it in his arms to a place proper for its being dressed. Thus did he act under the prevailing conduct of the deepest and dearest love to his Redeemer.

4. Our Redeemer's body being brought into some adjoining house, it was washed from blood and dust, and then wound in linen with spices, as the manner of the Jews was. But why did Joseph and Nicodemus make all this ado about the body of Christ? Though perhaps in this their management we may discern the weakness of

their faith, for a firm belief of the resurrection of Christ the third day would have saved them this care and cost, and have been more acceptable than all spices; yet herein we may evidently see the strength of their love, together with the value they had for his person and doctrine, which was no way lessened by the reproach of the cross.

5. The time of our Lord's burial was on the day of the preparation, when the Sabbath drew on; and this was the reason that they made such haste with the funeral. Though they were in tears for the death of Christ, yet they did not forget the work of an approaching Sabbath; but set themselves with all convenient speed and care to prepare for it.

6. The company who attended our Redeemer's funeral, was not any of the disciples, but only the women who came with him from Galilee, who, as they staid by him while he hung upon the cross, so they followed him all in tears, beheld the sepulchre where it was, which was the way to it, and how his body was laid in it: and all this they were led to, not by their curiosity, but by their affection to the Lord Jesus, which was strong as death, cruel as the grave, and which many waters could not quench.

7. The Redeemer's funeral was actually solemnized; for after all the above circumstances were over, then they acted as is related, John 19:41, 42. 'Now in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore, because of the Jews preparation day, for the sepulchre was nigh at hand. 'There laid they Jesus,' i. e. the dead body of Jesus. Some think that the calling of that Jesus intimates the inseparable union between the divine and human natures in his blessed person. Even this dead body was Jesus a Saviour; for his death is our life. Thus, without pomp or solemnity, is the body of Jesus laid in the cold and silent grave. Here lies our Surety arrested for our debt: so that if he be released, his discharge will be ours. Here is the Sun of righteousness set for a while to rise

again in greater glory, and set no more. Here lies a seeming captive to death, but a real conqueror over death. Yea here lies death itself slain, and the grave conquered: 'Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

SEVENTHLY, Our Redeemer continued under the power of death for a time. 'For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, Matth. 12:40. For clearing the import of Christ's continuing under the power of death for a time, consider,

1. That death hath a very strange and strong power in the world, which invades and prevails against all the children of men. 'For what man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?' says the Psalmist. This interrogation plainly imports, that no man, high or low, great or small, rich or poor, can possibly cover himself from the stroke of death. And no wonder; for as the apostle tells us, 'death hath reigned from Adam,' Rom. 5:14. The empire of death hath made an universal spread through the face of the earth, and, with an unrelenting fury, bears all the sons of men before it. And it is no way strange it be so, seeing it acts under the conduct of Heaven's irrepealable decree, 'It is appointed unto men once to die,' Heb. 9:27.

2. That the empire, power, and dominion of death, was introduced into the world by sin, Rom. 5:12. 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. The wages of sin is death.' And therefore man no sooner gave into apostacy from his Maker, but the awful sentence went forth, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,' Gen. 3:19.

3. That our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of life, fell under the power of death, and that in its most frightful and amazing form: for he died the painful, the cursed, the shameful, and lingering death of the cross; and this he did not by constraint, but with the utmost cheerfulness.

4. That it was for the sins of his elect people that the Lord of life came under the power of death. Their sins were imputed to him: 'He was made sin for us,' says the apostle, 'who knew no sin.' Because their sins were imputed to him, therefore death, the punishment of sin, came upon him. He was not only wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, but he died for our sins. He bare the sins of many; and for the transgressions of his people was he stricken, yea, stricken even unto death.

5. That though our Redeemer continued under the power of death, yet it was only for a time. Though this king of terrors brought the King of glory down to the gloomy shades of the grave, yet he could not hold him long there. Hence the apostle says, Acts 2:24. 'God loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.' Christ was imprisoned for our debt, and thrown into the hands of death; but divine justice being satisfied, it was not possible that he should be detained there, either by right or by force; for he had life in himself, and in his own power, and had conquered the prince of death.

6. That the time of our Redeemer's being under the power of death was only till the third day. For he rose the third day after his death: which was the time he had often prefixed, and he kept within it. He was buried in the evening of the sixth day of the week, and rose in the morning of the first day of the following week; so that he lay in the grave about thirty-six or thirty-eight hours. He lay so long to shew that he was really and truly dead, and no longer, that he might not see corruption.

If it should be asked, What were the reasons and ends of this amazing humiliation of the Son of God? I answer, That Christ humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

1. That he might satisfy divine justice in the room and stead of an elect world. When man by sin rebelled against his rightful Lord,

incensed justice called aloud for vengeance upon the atrocious offender; and had its rigorous demands been answered, all the race of mankind had perished in the depths of death and damnation for ever. But Christ, by the whole scene of his humiliation, has so fully answered all its demands of his chosen, that it can crave no more. For he by his obedience and satisfaction, as the Surety of unjust sinners, has so perfectly paid all their debt, that justice is completely atoned and pacified. Hence our Redeemer drew his last breath on the cross with these words, 'It is finished.'

2. To confirm and seal his testament. He had bequeathed many great and glorious legacies to his chosen; all which had failed for ever, if by his death he had not ratified and confirmed this his testament, 'For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all whilst the testator liveth,' Heb. 9:16, 17. Wherefore, that our Lord's testament might in that respect be made good, he sealed it with his heart's blood: 'This cup,' says he, 'is the new testament in my blood,' i. e. the new testament, which is ratified by my blood.

3. To conquer and subdue the devil. This malicious and subtil enemy of mankind had by his craft and power brought the whole race of Adam in subjection to his empire, reigning over and leading them captive at his pleasure. But our Lord through death destroyed him that had the power of death. It is true, the crucifying of Jesus was the devil's plot; for he put Judas upon betraying him, the Jews upon accusing him, Pilate upon condemning him, and the soldiers upon executing him. But our Lord outshot him in his own bow, and snared and took him in his own hands. Thus the devil, by plotting and pushing on the death of the Son of God, to prevent his own ruin, procured and promoted it.

4. To finish transgression, and put an end to sin, yea, to take away sin with all its direful effects, Rom. 8:3. 'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son,

in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.' For when an elect world lay sunk under the guilt of sin, captives under the power of it, vile under the pollution of it, undone under the weight of it, and most miserable under the baneful effects of it, Jesus humbled himself to the death on purpose to rescue and deliver them from all this. 'We have redemption through his blood,' says Paul, 'even the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace.' And says another apostle, 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.'

5. To deliver his people from the curse of a broken law, and the wrath of God. 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,' Gal. 3:13. 'Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come,' 1 Thess. 1:10. When all the curses of the law were marching forth, as it were in battle-array, against the children of Adam, and the dreadful wrath of an Almighty God was ready to pour in upon them, then did our Lord step in, and, by his deeply debased birth, life, and death, divert the furious storm from his chosen, so that not one curse, or the least drop of wrath, shall ever fall to their shave.

6. Lastly, That in due time he might bring all his people to the complete possession of immortal glory. When he saw them wallowing and sinking in the depths of sin and iniquity; when he saw them exposed to eternal death and damnation by reason of sin, and when he took a view of them as absolutely unable to do any thing towards their own relief and deliverance, his soul pitied them, and his bowels of compassion yearned upon them; so that in their stead he satisfied divine justice, subdued their enemies, abolished sin and death, rescued them from hell and wrath, and prepared for them eternal life and glory,

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. Here see the love of Christ in its most distinguishing glory. For the deeper he debased and the lower he humbled himself, the higher did

he raise, and the more clearly did he manifest his love. What heart can conceive, what tongue can express, the greatness of this love! It is love without a precedent or parallel. It passeth knowledge.

2. Here see the awful and tremendous severity of divine justice, which no less could satisfy than the Son of God's humbling himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Its resentment against sin swelled so high, that nothing could appease it, or move it to let go the criminal offenders, till the Son of God fell an expiatory sacrifice to it. And when the time of its acting this bloody tragedy upon our Redeemer came on, it would not forego nor abate one tittle of its demands. It would not spare him in one article of suffering which it could exact of him.

3. See here the prodigious evil of sin. Though the generality of men look upon it with a very light and easy eye; though they account it a very small matter to break in upon the divine law, and to transgress the bounds which the great God has fixed therein; yet whoever duly reflects upon the deep humiliation and sorrowful sufferings of Christ, will entertain quite other thoughts about it. Of all evils sin is infinitely the worst. Though a holy and just God has given many severe and terrible testimonies of his displeasure against sin, yet none of them appear with such an amazing awe as that which appears in the humiliation, death, and sufferings of his dear Son.

4. Let this look the pride of our hearts out of countenance; and let us think nothing too mean or low for us, whereby the glory of God and the good of others may be advanced. For Christ humbled himself deeper and lower than any ever did or can do, to procure the favour of God to sinners, to magnify the divine law and make it honourable; and therein hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps.

5. Let this teach you highly to prize the salvation purchased by Christ, and offered to sinners in the gospel. Say not of the sufferings of Christ, by your slighting the redemption thereby procured, What needs all this waste? Surely sin must be of a more malignant nature,

the justice of God more exact and rigorous, souls more precious, and salvation and mercy more difficult to obtain, than is ordinarily imagined. Take a view of Christ in his amazing humiliation and heavy sufferings, and see if ye can entertain those thoughts.

6. Let impenitent sinners and rejecters of Christ tremble. Was this done in the green tree, what shall be done to the dry? If Christ, when he became a sinner only by imputation was exposed to such heavy sufferings as would have sunk millions of men and angels, what shall be the fate of those who Spurn at his love, reject the offers of his grace and mercy, and refuse to accept of his salvation? What can they expect, but that the wrath of God shall come upon them to the uttermost, and they shall undergo the sorest punishment that incensed and insulted justice can inflict?

7. Accept of Jesus Christ as he offers himself in the gospel. He is willing to receive sinners, nay, the very worst and most abandoned of them, or he had not swimm'd through a sea of blood to catch them. O! be not despisers, but cheerful and willing receivers, of him who has written his love and good will to you in characters of blood.

8. Revenge the death of Christ on your lusts and idols. Give no quarter to, nor suffer them to live, that were the cause of his most humiliating and ignominious death. To cherish any sin or lust, is a high indignity done to the Son of God, and as it were a crucifying him afresh. O! then fly from every sin, account it your enemy, and Christ's enemy; and shew your love to the Redeemer, who humbled himself so deeply for you, by doing whatsoever he commands you, and avoiding all appearance of evil.

9. Lastly, Grudge not to part with any thing for Christ. He left the bosom of his Father, laid aside the robes of his glory, and exposed himself to the severest hardships and most intolerable sufferings, that you might not perish for ever! and will ye refuse any thing for his sake? Ye have no reason to shift his cross, or decline to take on

his yoke, when he suffered on the accursed cross to procure your deliverance from everlasting wrath and burnings.

OF CHRIST'S EXALTATION

PHIL. 2:9, 10, 11.—Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

HAVING spoke to the several parts of our blessed Redeemer's state of humiliation, I come now to treat of the several branches of his exaltation, or that high dignity and glory to which he is exalted, as the reward of his suffering even unto death. This bright Sun set as it were in a cloud, but he rose again, surrounded with the brightest rays of the most exalted glory and splendour. This exaltation is held forth very expressly in the text, which, as it is opposed to his death, includes his resurrection, or releasement from the grave. God has not only exalted him, but super-exalted him above the earth in his ascension. The name above every name which is given him, is the same in effect with his sitting at the right hand of God. The bowing of the knee is that acknowledgement of this power, dignity, and authority of Christ, by angels, men, and devils; the great evidence of which shall be at the last day, Rom. 14:10, 11. 'We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.' For it is written, 'As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.'

In discoursing further from this subject, I shall consider the several steps of our Lord's exaltation, as they are laid down from the scriptures in our Catechism, viz. 'his rising from the dead on the

third day, his ascending up into heaven, his sitting at the right-hand of God the Father, and his coming to judge the world at the last day.'

I. The first step of his exaltation was his resurrection, his rising out of the grave. Concerning this, consider the following things.

1. The nature of it. His resurrection was not the re-uniting of his divine to his human nature, for death had not separated that union, as I have formerly shewn; but his re-uniting his soul to his body, taking that life again which he had before laid down, John 10:17. And it was the very same body for substance which was crucified; it was the very same body that fell under death that rose again. It had been laid in the grave mangled and macerated with blows, stripes, and wounds; but in his resurrection the deformity thereby occasioned was removed, and nothing but the prints of the nails remained; as appears from John 20:25, 27.

2. The truth of his resurrection. Christ truly rose again. This truth was attested by the soldiers who guarded the sepulchre, as ye will find, Matth. 28:11–15 though the elders took care to smother the effect thereof. His friends bore the most ample testimony to it; such as the women who came to anoint his dead body, his disciples and many others. To these, 'he shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs,' Acts 1:3. And we are told, 1 Cor. 15:6 that 'he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.' The evangelists are unanimous in this matter. This truth is also manifest from the person's being God, who could not be confined in a grave, and the many miracles wrought to confirm it, evincing him to be alive, and reigning in glory.

3. The necessity of his resurrection. It was necessary he should rise from the dead.

(1.) That the scripture might be fulfilled, 1 Cor. 15:4 which cannot be broken. See Psal. 16:10. 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (the state of the dead); neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see

corruption.' This passage is expressly applied to the resurrection of Christ, Acts 2:31 and 13:35. And it was prophesied of him: Isa. 53:10. 'He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.' A notable type of it was Jonah's coming out of the whale's belly, Matth. 12:40.

(2.) In respect of the dignity and glory of his person. He was the true God and eternal life. How was it then possible, that he should be holden by death? Acts 2:24.

(3.) In respect of his Mediatory office, which would have been broken if he had not risen again. He was to reign for ever, Psal. 45:7. Luke 1:32; to intercede as a Priest for ever, Psal. 110:4 and therefore to enter into the holiest of all, after he had expiated our sins by his blood.

(4.) In respect of our salvation. If Christ had not risen, all the elect's hopes of heaven had rotted in the grave for ever: 1 Cor. 15:17. 'If Christ be not raised, (says the apostle), your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.' His resurrection was the life of his death, and had he not by his resurrection overcome death; it would for ever have devoured us also.

4. The time of his resurrection, the third day. He was crucified on Friday afternoon, and he arose early on the first day of the week, which has from that event been called the Lord's day, and observed as the Christian Sabbath in all the churches of Christ. This period was long enough to confirm the truth of his death. His body did not corrupt in the grave, Psal. 16:10. Acts 13:37. Nor was it ever after mortal, but put on immortality, Rom. 6:9. 'Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.' This was one difference betwixt Christ's resurrection and that of Lazarus, who rose again only to a mortal life.

5. The author of his resurrection. The resurrection of Christ is ascribed to himself, and we are firmly to believe that he rose by his

own power, John 2:19. 'Destroy this temple, (says he), and in three days I will raise it up.' John 10:17. 'I lay down my life, that I might take it again.' And this the scripture insists upon as an argument of the divinity of Christ, Rom. 1:4 where he is said to be 'declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:' which must needs be thus understood; for Lazarus also was raised; yet no such thing followed on it. It is ascribed also unto the Father, Rom. 6:4. But there is no inconsistency here: for whatsoever the Father doth, the Son also doth the same, the external works of the Trinity being common to each person. The reason why Christ's resurrection is ascribed to the Father, is, that he acted therein as a judge, letting out the prisoner when the debt was paid.

6. The manner of our Lord's resurrection.

(1.) It was ushered in with a terrible earthquake, Matth. 28:2. 'Behold, there was a great earthquake.' As the earth shook and trembled at our Lord's passion, so did it also at his glorious resurrection from the dead. This was an extraordinary and miraculous shaking of the earth, proceeding immediately from the divine power, as the eclipse of the sun which happened during his passion. It was a sign of triumph, and a token of victory, by which our Lord intimated to the whole world, that he had overcome death in its own dominions, and lifted up his head as a glorious conqueror above all his enemies. He came out of the grave with great solemnity, and marched out of the bloody field with a pomp and majesty becoming the dignity of Heaven's champion.

(2.) Christ in his resurrection was attended by some of the courtiers of heaven, Matt. 28:2. 'An angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.' Christ's power was not confined to the grave or the earth, but extended to heaven and all the host of it. Though the chief priests and Pharisees conspired together to keep him close shut up in the grave, sealed the stone which was rolled to the door of it, set a watch,

and made all things as sure as they possibly could, yet one of the heavenly host by a touch baffled all their measures. The angel of the Lord rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. This action speaks a secure triumph over all the obstructions of Christ's resurrection. He sat on the stone, defying all the powers of hell to roll the stone to the grave again: and he sat as a guard to the grave; for having frightened away the enemy's black guard, he sat expecting the women to give them an account of our Lord's resurrection, as he very pathetically did, ver. 6. 'He is not here: for he is risen, as he said: come, see the place where the Lord lay.'

(3.) He laid aside all the ensigns of mortality and death: for he stript himself of the grave-clothes, and left them behind him, John 20:5, 6, 7. The reasons of this laying them aside might be these. [1.] Because he rose to die no more. Lazarus came out with his grave-clothes on, because he was to die again; but Christ rising to an immortal life, came out free from all these incumbrances. [2.] Because he was going to be clothed with robes of glory. [3.] He left these clothes in the grave, as it were for the use of his people. For if the grave be a bed to the saint!, he hath thus sheeted it, and made it ready for them, that in it they may lie quietly and easily till the morning of the resurrection, when they shall enter into the full and eternal possession of the glory that is to be revealed. These grave-clothes were found in very good order; which shews that his body was not stolen away when the watch slept, as the chief priests and elders foolishly bade them say. Robbers of tombs have been known to take away the clothes and leave the body; but none ever took away the body, and left the clothes, especially when they were made of fine linen and new.

(4.) Christ's resurrection was attended with that of many others, Matt. 27:52, 53. 'The graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept arose, and came out of their graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.' Here observe, (1.) Who they were that rose. They are expressly called saints, persons sanctified by the Spirit and grace of God: for such only shall

rise by the virtue and power of Christ's resurrection. Who they were, whether the ancient patriarchs, the Old Testament martyrs, or more modern saints, who lived in Christ's time, but died before him, cannot be determined. (2.) That their number was considerable; they are called many. The benefits of our Lord's resurrection extends to many. (3.) The time of their rising was posterior to Christ's resurrection. For though before this the earth did quake, the rocks rend, and the graves were opened, yet none of them stirred out of these dark mansions till Christ was risen. It is in virtue of Christ's resurrection, that the bodies of all the saints shall in the fulness of time rise again. (4.) They went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. They did not appear to all the people, but to many; but whether friends or enemies, in what manner they appeared, how often, what they did and said, and how they disappeared, are secret things not to be known. It is very probable, however, that the great design of their appearing to so many was to bear testimony to the truth and certainty, to the power and glory of our Redeemer's resurrection. [5.] What became of these saints afterwards, is a question not easy to be determined. Some are of opinion, that as they rose only to bear witness of Christ's resurrection to those to whom they appeared, so having finished this their work, they retired to their graves again. But it seems to be more agreeable both to the Redeemer's honour and theirs, to suppose, that they rose, as he did, to die no more, and therefore ascended with him into glory.

7. The fruits of Christ's resurrection. Amongst many, I only name the following.

(1.) It is an argument of his having made complete satisfaction to the justice of God for the sins of his people, John 16:10. When the just Judge opens the prison door, it says that the prisoner's debt is fully paid, and he has received satisfaction for all demands from him. Christ's resurrection was in effect a discharge of all the debt he had taken upon him to pay.

(2.) It is an argument, that the bodies of the elect shall be raised at the last day, 1 Cor. 15:20. 'Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.' If Christ has risen, the power of death is broken. And the same Spirit dwells in his members, Rom. 8:11. And all the benefits of the covenant shall be made forthcoming, seeing he is alive to become executor of his own testament.

(3.) The duty of believers flowing from this is to walk in newness of life, Rom. 6:4. They are to rise from the grave of sin, and to put on the robes of true holiness. Dead sinners are not fit members of a living head.

II. Christ ascended into heaven, the seat of the blessed. Concerning this, let us observe,

1. In what respect he ascended. Not in respect of his divine nature, for that can change no place, and is confined to no place; but in respect of his human nature, which is so present in one place, that it cannot be in another at the same time, and it changeth one place for another by local motion. It was his human body that ascended into heaven, and which the heavens must contain till the restitution of all things.

2. The reality of his ascension. He did not merely disappear, but by a local motion went up from the earth into the highest heavens, leaving the one, and going to the other. And he ascended in a visible manner, before the eyes of his disciples.

3. The time of it, which was forty days after his resurrection, Acts 1:2, 3. This his long stay on the earth was the blessed effect of his matchless and unparalleled love to his church and people. Though ineffable glory was prepared and waiting for him in heaven, yet he would not go to possess it till he had ordered all things aright that concerned the good of his followers here on earth. More particularly, he staid so long on earth,

(1.) That he might the more convincingly testify unto his disciples the truth of his humanity, and confirm them in the faith of his being truly man.

(2.) To confirm them still the more strongly in the faith of his resurrection from the dead. This was a truth which the disciples were not easily induced to believe. Hence when they first heard it from Mary Magdalene, and the other women that had been at the sepulchre, it is said, that 'their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not,' Luke 24:11. But his staying so long on the earth, and frequently conversing with them, gave them full assurance of the reality of his resurrection. He showed himself alive to them by many infallible proofs. He walked and talked with them, ate and drank with them. He again and again shewed them the marks of the wounds in his hands, and feet, and side; which was the utmost proof the thing was capable of or required. Besides, it was not one or two, but many proofs which he gave them of this; for he was seen by them forty days; not indeed constantly residing with them, but frequently appearing to them, and bringing them by degrees to be fully satisfied of the truth of his resurrection.

(3.) To instruct them more clearly and perfectly in the knowledge of the mysteries of his kingdom, which after his departure they were to preach and propagate through the world. He had given them a general idea of that kingdom, and of the time when it should be set up, in the parable of the vineyard, Mark 12; but upon this occasion he let them more clearly into the nature of it, as a kingdom of grace in this world, and of glory in that which is to come: and no doubt opened to them that covenant which is the great charter by which it is incorporated. Thus our Lord did not entertain his disciples with discourses about politics in the kingdoms of men, about philosophy in the kingdom of nature, but about pure divinity and his spiritual kingdom, which were matters of greatest concern, both to themselves and to those to whom they were in a little time to preach.

4. The manner of our Lord's ascension.

(1.) He ascended not figuratively and metaphorically, but really and corporeally, by a local translation of his human nature from the earth to the highest heavens. He ascended from a mount, an high and eminent place, to ascertain his disciples of the truth of his ascension. He did not withdraw himself from them as at other times, but ascended openly in the view of them all, they looking stedfastly toward heaven as he went up. He ascended from the Mount of Olives, that he might enter on his glory nigh the place of his sufferings, and the last tragical scene of his life. It was at this mount that his heart was made sad; for there he began to be sorrowful and sore amazed: and it was there also that his heart was made glad, and filled with ineffable and triumphant joy. The same place afforded him a passage both to his cross and to his crown; for there his sorrows and sufferings began, and from thence he ascended into heaven.

(2.) He ascended while he was blessing his disciples. He blessed them as one having authority; yea, commanded the blessing upon them. And while he was so employed, he was parted from them, to intimate that his being so did not put an end to his blessing them, but that this privilege was to be continued with them by virtue of his powerful intercession for them in heaven. The first tidings of our Redeemer's birth were attended with praises to God and blessings to men: he began his public ministry with pronouncing blessings on certain characters, Matth. 5; when he died, he breathed out his soul in blessings to his enemies, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;' and just when he was leaving the world, he was translated with a blessing in his mouth.

(3.) He ascended powerfully, even by his own almighty power. As by the power of his eternal Godhead he broke through the gloomy shades of the grave, and rose again to an immortal life; so by the same almighty strength he went gloriously up through the yielding air into the bright regions of eternal light. Enoch and Elijah were both translated soul and body into heaven; but this was not by their own, but by a divine power which exerted itself upon that occasion,

by the ministry of angels. But our Redeemer went up upon the wings of his own almighty power.

(4.) He ascended softly and gradually. Though his conduct in this matter could not but strike with a strong surprise upon the minds of his disciples, yet his motion was so plain, easy, and distinct, that it fell very clearly under their observation; for while they beheld he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.' Thus he departed by little and little, and not in a rapturous haste.

(5.) He ascended in a glorious and triumphant manner.

[1.] There was a cloud prepared as his royal chariot to carry him up to his princely palace. A cloud, in the natural notion of it, is a thick and moist vapour, drawn up from the earth or sea, by the heat of the sun, to the middle region of the air, where it is condensed, congealed, and thickened, by the coldness of the place, and so hangs or moves like a huge mountain in the midst of the air, partly from natural causes, the sun or the wind, but especially by supernatural ones, the mighty power and appointment of God, who is said to use the clouds as princes do horses of state or chariots of triumph to ride on. Thus he descended in a cloud to Moses, and proclaimed the name of the Lord, Exod. 34:5: and it is said, Isa. 19:1. 'Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud.' We find the clouds were serviceable to our Redeemer: for a bright cloud overshadowed him at his transfiguration; he was carried up in a cloud to heaven at his ascension; and at the last day the clouds will be the chariots which will bring him to judgment. Hereby Christ discovered himself to be the Lord of all the creatures. He had already trode upon the earth, walked upon the sea, vanquished hell and the grave; and now he makes the clouds his chariots, and rides upon the wings of the wind.

(2.) In his ascension he was attended with a bright and blessed retinue of glorious angels. These angelic spirits graced the solemnity of his birth with anthems of triumphant joy; they ministered to him at the conclusion of his forty days' temptation by the devil; when he

was exposed to his amazing agony in the garden the evening before his crucifixion, they waited on him; and now, when he is making his triumphant entrance into glory, their presence adds to the glorious solemnity of the happy day. To this we may add, that it is not an improbable supposition, that on this grand occasion he was attended with the company of those many saints that rose from the dead after his resurrection; whom he carried along with him, not only to grace the solemnity of his ascension, but as the first-fruits of his triumph over death and the grave, and a demonstrative evidence that the rest should follow in due time.

(3.) He went to heaven as a glorious conqueror, triumphing over all his enemies. 'When he ascended upon high,' says the apostle, 'he led captivity captive,' Eph. 4:8. As conquerors of old In their solemn triumphs used to lead their captives fettered with iron chains: so Christ having spoiled principalities and powers, made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them, Col. 2:15. Some think that at Christ's ascension there was some real visible triumph, some open pomp and shew, in which the devils were led as chained captives through the air: which was visible, not to all, but to God, the angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. But whatever be in this, it is certain that Christ fought and overcame all his enemies: he gave them the last blow upon the cross, he seized on the spoil at his resurrection, and led them in triumph at his ascension into heaven, and by his peaceable possession of his throne his subjects enjoy the benefit of all.

(4.) He ascended into heaven with shouts and acclamations of great joy, Psal. 47:5. 'God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.' Hence, (1.) His ascension was celebrated with the acclamations of angels. If they sang so cheerfully when they came to proclaim his birth, O what shouts and jubilations were heard among them when they accompanied him in his triumphant entrance into heaven! The whole city of God was moved at his coming; the very heavens resounded, and echoed their acclamations of joy. Hence is that passage, Psal. 24:7. 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift

up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.' The entry of a mighty and victorious prince is there described; and so it is proper unto Christ: they applaud him there as a mighty conqueror, newly returned from the spoils of his enemies. (2.) The blessed saints make the like applauses, as the prophet describes it, Isa. 63:1, 2, 3. 'Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.' There is here a dialogue between Christ and the saints, to express their acclamations at his victory. They are represented as filled with admiration at his glorious triumphs over all his enemies: and they celebrate his victorious return from so bloody a battle, like a great and valiant general, gloriously adorned with rich robes and royal apparel, and besprinkled with the blood of his implacable enemies. (3.) God testifies his approbation of what Christ had done, by giving him a kindly welcome home to heaven, Psal. 110:1. 'The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool:' As if he had said, 'Thy work is well done, Son, thou art welcome home to glory; sit now at my right hand,' &c. And on this account it is said, Dan. 7:13. 'I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man, came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him.' This vision of Christ was accomplished in his ascension. The holy angels bring him to the Father, called here, 'the Ancient of Days,' who gloriously rewards him for his toil and travel on earth, and his bloody sufferings in accomplishing the work of man's redemption, and receives him as it were with open arms, rejoicing exceedingly to see him again in heaven; and therefore he is said to be 'received up into glory,' 1 Tim. 3:16.

(5.) He ascended into heaven in a most munificent manner, bestowing many royal gifts and blessings upon his people. Hence says the apostle, Eph. 4:8. 'When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.' The apostle here refers to Psal. 68:13. 'Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.' There is here an allusion to the ancient customs of princes or generals, who, after some glorious achievements, or victories, used to mount their triumphant chariot, and enter into their royal cities attended by their captive enemies, and afterwards to distribute gifts to their subjects and soldiers. Thus Christ, at his glorious ascension, when he entered heaven with solemn triumph, bestowed many rich and inestimable gifts upon men, to fit and qualify them for the work of the ministry, and to edify his mystical body. Some of these gifts were extraordinary, as the gifts of tongues and miracles, which were necessary and very useful in the first ages of Christianity. Others, again, were ordinary, and are to continue to the end of the world. And these are of various kinds. To some he gives depths of learning and a profound judgment; to others a gaining elocution; to some a mighty pathos, and melting influence upon the affections, and to others a forcible power of arguing. But they are all designed to gain souls to Christ, and promote the interests of his kingdom.

5. Why, or for what ends Christ ascended into heaven.

1. That he might be solemnly inaugurated and installed in glory. This was due unto him by Mediatory compact. He was to drink of the brook in the way, and therefore should he lift his head. This was the order that God appointed for his exaltation. The combat was to precede his triumph. He was first to suffer, and then to enter into glory. Hence we read, 1 Pet. 1:11 that 'the Spirit did testify beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.' His triumphant laurel grew upon the thorns of his cross, and received a verdure from his dying tears. The palms spread in his way at his entrance into Jerusalem a little before his death, are regarded by

some as an emblem of this, it being the nature of that plant to grow and increase the higher by the weights that are hung upon it. For so did our blessed Lord rise to a more glorious and triumphant height by his heavy pressures.

(2.) To make way for the Spirit. For if Christ had not gone away, the Comforter had not come. This plentiful effusion of the Spirit was very necessary to fit and qualify the apostles for propagating the gospel through the world. Such weak and illiterate men as they generally were, could not have managed so great a work without a mighty magazine of divine eloquence and vigorous courage. It was therefore needful that our great High Priest should enter into the holy place, and appear before God with the blood of his sacrifice; that the treasures of the Spirit might be opened, and that the divine flame might issue out thence to inspire them with abilities for so great an undertaking.

(3.) To plead and make intercession for his people. After he had shed his precious blood on the earth for the expiation of their sin, he rose again from the dead, and went up into heaven as their Advocate and Intercessor, that, by virtue of his meritorious sacrifice, he might answer all the charges brought against them, and sue out all the good things promised to them.

(4.) To prepare mansions of glory for all his followers, John 14:2. These were indeed prepared for them from all eternity, in the immutable purpose and decree of God, and from the foundation of the world by his creative power. But they were further prepared by Christ's ascension. And this lies in the following particulars. [1.] By this he set open the gates of heaven, that poor sinners might enter in. He removed all the bars and obstructions that were in the way, and made a patent passage for them into glory. [2.] He hath as a public person taken possession of the celestial kingdom in their name. On this account he is called 'the forerunner,' Heb. 6:20. [3.] He prepares it for his people, in his sanctifying and purifying it for them. This was typified of old by the sprinkling the tabernacle, and all the Vessels of

the sanctuary, with the blood of the sacrifices. Hence it is said, Heb. 9:23, 24. 'It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.' We are not to think that heaven was polluted, and so under any necessity of being made clean: but the cry of man's sin had ascended up on high, as it were with a stinking savour; and therefore Christ behoved to go up and perfume it with his precious merit. [4.] He prepares it for his people, in providing and fitting all things for their entertainment against they come; as Joseph was sent into Egypt to prepare for his father Jacob.

Lastly, The duty that this lays on all that pretend interest in Christ. (1.) Let our hearts be there where our Lord is. Hence is that exhortation, Col. 3:1, 2. 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.' Let us not be pursuing earthly things as our treasure, but live in this world as those whose heads are homeward, to the house prepared by their ascended Lord. (2.) Let us thence be encouraged to encounter with magnanimity and courage all difficulties that we may meet with in our Christian course and warfare; knowing that we shall be conquerors at last through him that loved us. Christ fought his way to the glory promised him through legions of armed hosts; and so must we, if we would be conformed to him as our Head: he has reached to the crown as the reward of his obedience and sufferings; and so shall we if we follow on in his strength: 'Let us,' therefore, 'lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,' Heb. 12:1.

III. The third step of our Lord's exaltation, is his sitting at the right hand of God.

This phrase, 'the right hand of God,' Heb. 1:3. Mark 16:19. Eph. 1:20. 1 Pet. 3:22 is not to be taken properly but in a figurative sense. For God being a pure Spirit, is void of all bodily parts. When it is said, that Christ sits at God's right-hand, it is a borrowed expression, wherein the Lord is pleased to condescend to the weakness of our capacities, to the end we may form suitable thoughts of that glorious and exalted state into which Christ is advanced in the heavens. The phrase is wholly metaphorical, taken from the custom of kings and princes, who use to place those at their right hands, and next to themselves, upon whom they would confer the chief marks of favour and honour. More particularly, the right hand denotes,

1. Majesty and honour. It is the place we confer upon those we highly esteem. Thus, Solomon placed his mother at his right-hand, when he was set on his royal throne, 2 Kings 2:19. And it is said of the church, the spouse of Christ, to denote the honour that he puts upon her, that 'she is at his right-hand,' Psal. 45:9. 'Upon thy right-hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.' So God, in testimony of the great honour and esteem that he puts upon Christ as Mediator, hath set him at his right-hand, which on this account is called 'the right-hand of the Majesty on high,' Heb. 1:3.

2. His power. Hence saith the Psalmist, Psal. 77:10. 'I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right-hand of the Most High.' There we find God's power under the metonymy of a right hand, opposed to the infirmity of his servant. 'My infirm and weak faith (saith Asaph) made me apt to sink under the weight of Heaven's displeasure; but when I called to mind my sweet experiences of the divine power which had been exerted for my deliverance in former distresses, this revived my spirit, and refreshed me again.

Christ's 'sitting at the right-hand of God,' implies the following things.

1. A state of rest, Micah 4:4. 'They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree.' Christ had a troublesome life while in the

world; but now that he has finished the work the Father gave him to do, 'he has for ever sat down at the right hand of God,' Heb. 10:12 and is thereby set beyond the reach of men and devils. While here, they would give him no rest from his cradle to his grave; but now they may tear his picture, and persecute his members, but they cannot reach his person.

2. Continuance in that state, 2 Kings 7:3. 'Why sit we here until we die?' said the four leprous men at the gate of Samaria. The days of sorrow that he met with on earth shall never recur; his crown shall flourish on his head, and his kingdom stand firm and be established.

His 'sitting at God's right hand' denotes,

1. The accomplishment of that work, and the consummation of all those offices, which he was to perform on the earth for the redemption of elect sinners. For till all this was finished, he was not to return to his glory. 'For he that hath entered into his rest, hath ceased from his works, as God did from his,' Heb. 4:10.

2. The great delight and satisfaction that the Father had in Christ, and in that glorious work which he had finished. When he returned from earth to heaven, the Father welcomed him with the greatest testimony of satisfaction and joy, 'Sit thou on my right hand,' &c. Psal. 110:1.

3. The great honour and dignity to which he is advanced in heaven. While he was here on earth he veiled his divinity with the infirmities of the flesh, and lived in a mean and low condition: but now he is exalted to the highest honour. In this respect he hath bestowed more honour on his own Son as Mediator, than ever he did on any creature: for, as it is said, Heb. 1:13. 'To which of the angels said he at any time, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?'

4. His being invested with sovereign dominion and supreme authority and power. 'God hath highly exalted him, and given him a

name above every name,' Phil. 2:9, 10. 'He hath set him at his own right-hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, &c. 'Thou madest him a little lower than the angels,' i. e. in respect of his state of humiliation on the earth; 'thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, and set him over the works of thy hands, and hast put all things in subjection under his feet, Heb. 2:7, 8.

It is Christ as Mediator that sits at the Father's right hand. With respect to his divine nature, which in the days of his flesh was as a bottle in the smoke, apparently sullied and veiled, it now breaks forth in all its essential glory and splendour. And with regard to his human nature, which while tabernacling here bore the likeness of sinful flesh, and had nothing more engaging in it than that of other men to outward aspect, it has attained a glory far superior to all creatures, even the very angels being made subject to the man Christ.

The ends for which our Redeemer sitteth at the right hand of God are these following.

1. That, as a mighty King, he may protect and defend his church and people, against the rage of all their enemies, both temporal and spiritual, Isa. 32:1, 2; Deut. 33:26, 27.
2. That he may subdue all the enemies of his kingdom and people, the devil, with all his retinue, the world, the flesh, sin, and hell, Psal. 110:1. Acts 2:36. Heb. 10:12, 13. 1 Cor. 15:25.
3. That with royal munificence he may dispense unto all his faithful subjects all those gifts and graces that may qualify them for the fruition of that glory that is to be revealed, Acts 5:31.
4. That he may act the part of a powerful Intercessor for them, Rom. 8:34.
5. That all his friends and followers may with him be translated into heaven, and advanced unto a glorious state, being made kings and

priests unto God, Eph. 1:4, 5, 6. Rev. 3:21.

USE. Behold here the great difference between our Redeemer's state while here on earth, and what it is now in heaven. How wonderfully is the scene changed! When he was on earth, he lodged in a stable, but now he reigns in a royal palace. Then he had a manger for his cradle, but now he sits in a chair of state. While here he was hated and scorned by men, but now he is adored by angels. Here his name was reproached and reviled, but there he hath a name above every name. Here he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; but now he is anointed with the oil of gladness, and filled with inexpressible delight and joy. While here he seemed to have no form or comeliness why he should be desired; but now he is manifestly the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Here he lay grovelling upon the ground, sweating drops of clotted blood; but there he sits upon a royal throne, surrounded with many myriads of holy angels. Here he groaned, but there he triumphs; here he was crucified, but there he is crowned.

2. Behold how highly our nature is dignified and ennobled, in the person of our Redeemer. It is far exalted above that of the angels; and these glorious spirits bow the knee to him who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.

3. This lets us see that the redemption of lost sinners, that was brought about by the death of Christ was very pleasing unto the Father. The great dignity and honour that is now conferred upon him, speaks a fragrant in his satisfaction to God, as well as a fulness of merit for the sons of men.

4. Then we should draw near to him in all the duties of worship, with the most awful reverence and deepest prostration of soul, such as becomes the glory and dignity of his adorable Majesty. Let us have grace whereby we may serve him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.

5. Then let this exalted Saviour have your hands and your heart. Will ye deny him a lodging in your souls, to whom the Father has given to sit on his right hand? The rejecting of Christ in his humble estate, was grievously punished on many individuals, and occasioned the destruction of the Jewish church and nation. And shall ye escape, if ye reject him now in his exalted and enthroned state? It is better that our hearts be his throne, where he may sway his sceptre in a way of mercy and grace, than that we be made his footstool in wrath.

6. Let this settle and compose the hearts of the Lord's people, with respect to the state of religion, and the interests of Christ's kingdom among men. Christ is seated on his throne, and will see to his interest in the world. Zion's God and King reigneth, Isa. 52:7. If Christ be on his throne, all his enemies shall be destroyed. As sure as he reigns King for ever, so sure shall Antichrist be degraded and hurled from his throne, and all the rags he has left behind him in the Protestant churches be burnt up.

IV. The last step of our Lord's exaltation, is his coming to judge the world at the last day. As I discoursed to you of this formerly*, I shall be the briefer now. I shall endeavour a little to consider,

1. The manner and circumstances of Christ's coming to judge the world.
2. The Judge.
3. The parties to be judged.
4. The matters about which they are to be judged.
5. The properties of it.
6. The final causes of the judgment.

FIRST, I am to consider the manner and circumstances of Christ's coming to judge the world.

1. He shall come with observation, in the view of the whole assembled world: for all the kindreds of the earth shall on that day see this mighty Personage with their bodily eyes. None of all the sons and daughters of Adam can possibly avoid this wonderful sight. 'Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him,' Rev. 1:7.

2. Though he shall come with observation, or in a visible manner, yet he will do so very suddenly and surprisingly. As the universal deluge found the old world sleeping in the deepest security, so at the second coming of Christ the sinners of the last times will be drenched in slumbering stupidity, as is plain from Matth. 24:37, 38, 39. In short, the coming of a thief to break a house, is not more surprising to those in it, than Christ's coming to judgment will be to sinners. Hence the apostle says, 1 Thess. 5:2. 'Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.'

3. He will come very seasonably, at the very precise point and period of time fixed upon in the eternal councils of heaven. When once that memorable moment begins, he will delay no longer, but instantly rend the heavens, and come down, 2 Pet. 3:9, 10.

4. He will come very terribly. In that day the radiant rays of his majestic glory will break out with such an awful brightness, as will cause convulsions of the most formidable horror in the breasts of the ungodly. See Rev. 6:14–17.

5. He will come gloriously: for 'then shall they see the Son of man coming with great power and glory,' Mark 13:26. To evince this, consider,

(1.) That this coming will be ushered in with that which our Lord himself calls 'the sign of the Son of man,' Matth. 24:30. What this sign of the Son of man is, interpreters are not agreed. Some take it to be Christ himself, others the burning up of the world, others the sound of the last trumpet, and the Papists the cross. But I think none

of these can be the sign of the Lord Christ coming to judgment. I rather incline to follow the opinion of a judicious divine, who gathers what the sign of the Son of man is from Matth. 24:27. 'For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be;' that is, with infinite brightness and splendour will he come at that day. When he appears the second time without sin unto salvation, such rays of radiant brightness will set upon and shine from his body, as will darken all other lights, and awaken the drowsy world to look for his coming. Now, that such a brightness will encompass and shine from our Redeemer's body, we have no reason to doubt, seeing at his transfiguration upon the Mount 'his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was as white as the light,' Matth. 17:2. Now, all this beauty and brightness that appeared on our Redeemer's body at his transfiguration, was but a type and figure of that refulgent splendour which will shine from it in that day when he will come to judge the world in righteousness. And this matchless and marvellous brightness we may presume to be that which he himself calls 'the sign of the Son of Man.'

(2.) When our Lord comes, the whole frame of nature will suffer the most fearful convulsions, and at last be rolled up in an universal flame, Psal. 50:3. Dan. 7:9, 10. When once this mighty flame breaks out, it will burn with the keenest fury, and lay the earth, with all its works, in heaps of ruinous rubbish, 2. Pet. 3:10.

(3.) At his coming he will be attended with a splendid retinue of ten thousand times ten thousand glorious angels. The flaming seraphims, those mighty ministers of his who fulfil all his pleasure, shall in a magnificent body form a majestic cavalcade, when the Prince of the kings of the earth comes to judgment, Matth. 16:27. 2 Thess. 1:7. Dan 7:10.

(4.) When he comes, he will sit upon a throne high and lifted up; and before him shall the general assembly of men and devils, be solemnly sisted, Matth. 25:31, 32. Rev. 20:11, 12.

SECONDLY, I come now to speak of the Judge. And this is the Lord Jesus Christ. 'For, (says the apostle) we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ,' 2 Cor. 5:10. Now, he is ordained Judge of the world.

1. Because this Judgment is to be acted visibly. Men are to be judged, and the whole process with them will be for things done in the body. Now God is invisible in his nature, and therefore hath most wisely ordained the last judgment of the world to be transacted by a visible person. The Son of God will appear in his human nature, seated on a visible throne, that he may be seen and heard of all.

2. Because Christ is only qualified for this office. (1.) On account of the great dignity and excellency of his person, being God-man. No mere creature is capable of so high a trust, and such a glorious commission. To pass a sovereign sentence upon angels and men, is a royalty reserved for the Son of God alone, (2.) On account of the immense difficulty of this work. No mere creature is able to discharge it. If a select number of the holy angels of the highest order were deputed for this purpose, they could not manage the judicial trial of one man. For, besides the innumerable acts and omissions in one life, the secret springs of the heart, from whence the guilt or goodness of moral actions is derived, are not open to them. It is he alone who discerns all things that can require an account of all.

3. He is constituted Judge of the world, as a reward of his death and bloody sufferings. So the apostle declares, Phil. 2:8, 9, 10. His victorious sufferings are the titles to his triumphs. His being so ignominiously condemned by men, is the just reason of his advancement to this dignity and glory. This will for ever roll away the ignominy of his cross.

THIRDLY, Who are they that shall be judged? All must appear before Christ's tribunal. Men of all conditions in the church, apostles and private Christians, ministers and people, old and young, the good and the bad, believers and unbelievers, the just and the unjust, Jews

and Gentiles, bond and free. Men of all conditions in the world must stand before Christ's bar, high and low, rich and poor, noble and ignoble, princes and peasants. No rank, degree, or quality, can exempt men from this appearance. All the distinctions which are among men here cease at the grave's mouth. All stand there on the same level, and are of the same mould. In a word, all the apostate angels and the universal progeny of Adam, shall appear before Christ at that day.

FOURTHLY, What are the things about which men shall be judged? We learn from 2 Cor. 5:10 that 'they are the things done in the body.' And they are these three, works, words, and thoughts.

1. All men's works will come unto judgment, whether they be good or bad, Eccl. 12:14. 'God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.' All their good works will then be tried, as acts of piety towards God, and acts of righteousness and charity towards men, with respect to their principle, motives, and end. All men's evil works will be tried in judgment, both open and secret. Many dig deep now to hide their counsels from the Lord, and carry their wickedness under a vail of darkness, and care not what they do, provided they do it undiscerned. There are many abominations committed in men's lives, which the eyes of the world cannot penetrate into; and there are innumerable evils lurking in their hearts, which no tongue can disclose. But at the last day all those things will be brought to light, such as midnight revels, secret murders, fraudulent dealings, and hidden hypocrisies.

2. All men's words shall be tried in judgment. God gave not the power and organ of speech to man, which is his glory and excellency above the beasts, to serve a sinful passion or corrupt humour, or to vent the froth and vanity of his own spirit, but to extol and magnify his Creator, and render him the praise of all his glorious and admirable works. Christians should employ their tongues for the honour of God, and the edification of one another. But O how wofully

is this noble faculty abused by many, in cursing and swearing, lying, slandering, and detracting, and by belching forth obscene and scurrilous speeches! The lips of many drop nothing but gall and poison, to infect and corrupt others. Now, all this must come into judgment. Our Saviour tells us, that every idle word that a man speaks, he shall give account of it in the day of judgment.

3. All men's thoughts will be tried in judgment. For Christ will 'make manifest the counsels of the heart,' 1 Cor. 4:5. Many think now that thoughts go free; but it is not so in God's account. He knows all men's thoughts, and records them in the book of his remembrance, and at the last day they will be manifested and revealed. O what an infinite variety of thoughts is in every man's mind? This thinking faculty is never idle, but is always putting forth whole shoals of thoughts. Men have many atheistical and blasphemous thoughts, many murdering and revengeful thoughts, covetous and ambitious thoughts, unchaste and impure thoughts, vain, empty, and unprofitable thoughts, and many bold presumptuous thoughts. Now, all these must come into judgment.

FIFTHLY, What are the properties of this judgment?

1. It will be an universal judgment. Those that lived under the law, and those that lived under the gospel, and those that having no law were a law unto themselves, Rom. 2:12 those that had many talents, and they that had but one, must all appear at Christ's bar. Those that were carried from the cradle to the grave, and those that stooped for age, the father and the child, the master and the servant, in a word, the whole offspring of Adam, will be judged at that day. The bowels of the earth, the bottom of the sea, and all the elements, shall give up their dead; and all the apostate angels shall then appear and receive their final doom.

2. It will be an awful judgment. It is called in scripture 'the judgment of the great day.' The immediate antecedents of Christ's appearing will make it very terrible. There will be a dreadful catastrophe of the

world, which will fill men's hearts with horror and fear; the bands and ligaments of nature will then be broken asunder, and her present frame and constitution dissolved; the elements shall be reduced into their primitive confusion: the sun shall be darkened, the moon shall not give her light, the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken, Matt. 24:29. There will be a strange convulsion of nature at the coming of the Lord. All the stately palaces and magnificent buildings which men doat so much upon now, will then be reduced to ashes. Again, the manner of his coming will be awful and solemn: 'For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord,' 1 Thess. 4:16, 17. This will be such a shout as armies were wont to make when the signal of battle was given; and after this shout the trump of God shall sound. By this tremendous blast sinners shall be affrighted out of their graves; but to the saints it will carry no more terror than the roaring of cannons, when armies of friends approach a besieged city for the relief of those that are within it. And the dead being raised, they shall be gathered together before the great and awful throne on which Christ shall sit in his glory, and there they shall be exactly divided by the angels into two companies, one on the Judge's right-hand, and the other on his left. Here will be the greatest assembly that ever met; where Adam may see his numerous offspring, even as the sand upon the sea-shore, which no man can number.

3. This judgment will be exact and critical. It is the Searcher of the heart, to whom all secrets are known, that will pass this final sentence upon men. His eyes are as a flame of fire, and can penetrate into the centre of the soul. All sins, whether secret or open, shall be accounted for at that day; and the sins of men's thoughts and affections, which Satan could not accuse them of, shall then be brought into judgment. For in that day 'God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ,' Rom. 2:16. All men's sins of omission, and

their woful neglect of improving the means, advantages, and opportunities for doing or receiving good, shall be accounted for at that day. All acts of commission in youth and age, whether gross sensuality, as licentiousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries, and all excess of riot, shall be accounted for to him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead, 1 Pet. 4:4, 5. And all acts of unrighteousness to men, yea, and sins of lesser guilt, for which the most part of men are not touched either with grief or shame while here, shall then be produced in judgment. And all the sins of men's words, which are so easily committed, but not so easily observed, shall be called to a heavy remembrance. This will be a day that will perfectly fan the world. Justice will then hold the balance in an even hand; Christ will go to work so exactly, that some divines have thought, that the day of judgment will last as long as the day of the gospel's administration hath done or shall do.

4. It will be a righteous judgment; 'He will judge the world in righteousness,' Acts 17:31. His knowledge of all men's characters and actions is infallibly true, and therefore his sentence upon them will be incontestibly just, consistent with all the rules of the highest equity and justice. And the sentence he shall pass upon both saints and sinners, shall be universally applauded at that day.

5. Lastly, It is a final judgment, from which there can lie no appeal. Here in the world, if men judge themselves wronged in one court, they can appeal to another. But it is not so here: for this is the supreme tribunal, where the great Sovereign of heaven and earth will give judgment upon angels and men: and the sentence once passed, will immediately be put in execution, Matth. 25:46. Just after the sentence is pronounced by Christ, it is immediately added, 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.' The sentence shall be irrevocable, and can never be repealed. It will determine the eternal state of all, and transmit them either to everlasting happiness or misery.

SIXTHLY, What are the final causes or ends of this judgment?

1. The glory of the justice and mercy of God; the former in punishing the wicked, and the latter in rewarding his friends. Many eminent displays of these attributes have been exhibited in the world, but the largest and fullest manifestation of them will be given at the last day, when the righteous judge 'shall take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,' 2 Thess. 1:8, 9. And then he shall say unto the righteous, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, Matth. 25:34.

2. The glory of the Lord Jesus, which will be highly manifested at that day. His first coming was obscure and without observation. For he came in the form of a servant, and was reproached and reviled by men. But then he will come in power and great glory, as the Lord and Heir of all things. At his first coming he veiled his divinity with the infirmities of flesh. But then the rays of his incomprehensible glory shall dazzle the eyes of all that behold him.—When he came first to the world, he stood before the tribunals of men, and was condemned to the cursed death of the cross; but then he will sit upon a glorious throne, and all the princes and potentates in the world shall stand trembling before him, expecting a sentence from his mouth, upon which their eternal destiny will depend. He is now seated at the right-hand of the Majesty on high; but the curtains of the heavens conceal his glory from us; and therefore there is a time fixed, when in the sight of the whole world he will manifest his glory.

3. The rewarding of men according to their works, and thereby vindicating the providence of God from the imputation of unrighteousness in his governing the world.—Things seem to be carried with an unequal balance in the present life. The wicked prosper, as if they were rewarded for being evil; and the godly suffer, as if they were punished for being good. Yea, the virtuous and the vicious are equally miserable here. In common calamities, there is no difference between the righteous and the wicked. There is no peculiar

antidote to secure them from pestilential infection; there is no strong retreat to defend them from the sword of a conquering enemy: they have no secret provisions in time of famine; for the wheat and the tares are bound in a bundle, and cast into the same fire: yea, oftentimes the godly are in the worse condition, and merely on account of their goodness. They are daily oppressed, because they do not make resistance; and loaded with sufferings, because they endure them with patience. They are for God's sake made the spectacles of extreme misery, while the insolent defyers of his majesty and laws enjoy all manner of visible felicity. And therefore, for the vindication of his justice, there must be a day of retribution, wherein God will reward every man according to his works. Divine justice requires that there should be a different procedure with those that differ among themselves; that it should be well with them that do well, and ill with them that do evil; and that every man should reap according to what he hath sown.

USE 1. Labour to get a firm belief and persuasion of this great and awful truth. Alas! the most part of men are so busied about the affairs of this present life, that they do not mind the future. These awful words, death, judgment, and eternity, make no more impression upon their hearts, than if they were words of no signification. This is a truth of the greatest importance, and therefore is clearly and plentifully revealed in the holy scripture. Hearken then to the voice of this heavenly oracle, and believe and tremble at the thoughts of this awful day.

2. Think frequently on this terrible judgment, that the belief of it may be powerful on your hearts and lives. One great cause of men's woful neglect of duty is the want of serious thoughts concerning Christ's second coming. This renders them lazy and secure, so that they make no provision for it: but where it is firmly believed, and duly thought upon, O how active and diligent does it make them! It had this effect on Paul, 2 Cor. 5:9, 10, 11. Many put this day far away, and set it at a remote distance from them; and this makes them stupid and secure. I have read of a minister, who in a sermon described the last

judgment in all its terrors, with such ardent expressions, and those animated with such an affecting voice, and such an inflamed countenance and action, that his hearers broke forth into passionate cries, as if the Judge himself had been present to pass the final sentence upon them. In the height of their commotion, the preacher bade them stop their tears and passions, for he had one thing more to add, the most affecting and astonishing consideration of all the rest, namely, that, within less than a quarter of an hour, the memory and regard of that which so transported them would vanish, and their affections return to their carnal objects in their usual manner. The neglect of serious consideration makes even the doctrine of eternal judgment to become without efficacy. It is needful, therefore, that the belief of this truth be so firmly seated in the heart, that it may engage the attention of the thoughts, and may have a royal power over the will and affections, that so our lives may be ordered according to its rules. Serious thoughts of this awful day would prove the most effectual restraint from sin: and particularly it would have a notable efficacy in keeping them back from secret sins, and deprive the devil of one of his greatest advantages against men, arising from solitude and secrecy. It would be a powerful remedy against sensual temptations, which so easily ensnare the hearts of men; and would change the apprehensions of the mind, alter the taste of the appetite, and make the most enticing and irresistible lusts the objects of our greatest detestation.

3. We should fear and tremble at the thoughts of this awful day. The great ones in the world that are most powerful and unruly, may hence see that there is a power above them. Many oppose Christ and his interest now, saying, 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us,' Psal. 2:3. But they should remember that 'he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision,' verse 4. The day is hastening on, when he shall speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure,' ver. 5. He 'will break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel,' ver. 9. The day is coming, when he shall appear in his power and great glory, and all the opposers of his cause and interest

shall be sisted before his throne, and hear this dreadful sentence pronounced against them: 'Those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me,' Luke 19:27.

4. Then this should make the saints patient under all their trials and sufferings. They have no reason to be ashamed of suffering disgrace for Christ; for he will abundantly reward them at the great day. Whatever injustice they have got from men, they will have righteous judgment from God. This should make them despise the reproaches and censures of their most malicious adversaries. There is a day appointed, wherein oppressed innocence shall obtain the noblest victory, and disgraced godliness the most public and highest honour. They may suffer under the tyranny of time, but they shall reign in the kingdom of eternity. The belief of this is enough to make them glory in the sharpest tribulations, and joy fully triumph over Satan with his perverted malignant world, Heb. 11:25, 26. 2 Cor. 4:17, 18.

5. Lastly, Make the Judge your friend in time, by receiving and embracing him as your only Saviour, offered to you as such in the gospel; and give all diligence that ye may be found in him, clothed with his righteousness, in that terrible day. There will be no standing before his awful tribunal, unless you be clothed in the garments of your elder brother; and there will be no access into the guest-chamber, unless ye have on the wedding-garment of imputed righteousness. Therefore kiss the Son, and be reconciled to him, and so shall ye appear before him as your Judge at the last day. Acquaint now yourselves with him, and be at peace; for thereby good shall come unto you, particularly that of a solemn acquittal in the last judgment. But if ye will not now submit unto the sceptre of his grace and righteousness, and subject yourselves to him as your only rightful Lord and Sovereign, willing to have him to reign over you, and to be ruled by his laws, ye shall not be able to stand in judgment, but be condemned with his enemies, and have your eternal habitation in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. Knowing

therefore the terrors of the Lord, be persuaded to flee from the wrath to come, and so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

OF THE APPLICATION OF REDEMPTION

TITUS 3:5.—He saved us,—by the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

HAVING taken a view of our glorious Redeemer, in his person, incarnation, offices, and his twofold state of humiliation and exaltation, let us now proceed to consider the application of that redemption which he purchased for us by his obedience and death.

If we cast our eyes backward to the preceding words, we find, (1.) Our wretched natural state, ver. 3. 'For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.' This is a dreadful picture of the depravity and misery of human nature; in which not only Pagans, who lived without God in the world, but Jews the peculiar people of God, of which nation was Paul, were deeply involved. (2.) Redemption purchased for us by Jesus Christ, which is the way in which the love of God to man appeared. And this redemption is as extensive as the wretched condition of man. As all mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, are by nature in a state of wretchedness, so redemption was purchased by Christ for both, and both are warranted to come to Christ for it; though none but the elect among both will obtain it And in the text we have the application of that redemption, He saved us, &c. In which we have,

1. Sinful creatures made partakers of Christ's redemption. He saved us. He speaks of himself and other saints yet in the world, whom he says God has saved, saved by virtue of Christ's death, from sin and

wrath, put them into a state of, and given them a right to, eternal complete salvation.

2. How they are made partakers of this redemption.—Where we may observe, (1.) The impulsive cause: 'not according to our good works,' these were not the moving causes of our salvation; but 'his own mercy:' the same mercy that moved him to send our Redeemer, moved him to apply the redemption purchased by him. (2.) The way and manner of accomplishing it: By the renewing of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit makes the application of that redemption, regenerating us, whereof baptism is the sign, and so renewing and making us new creatures. Thus, Christ made the salve for our sore, by his obedience and death, and the Spirit applies it. Hence we have a proper answer to that.

Quest. 'How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?'

DOCT. Ans. 'We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit.'

In handling this subject, I shall,

I. Consider the purchase of this redemption.

II. The application of it.

III. Apply the subject in some practical uses.

1. As to the purchase of redemption or salvation spoken of in the text, five things are to be considered.

I. What the redemption is. 1. It is a deliverance by payment of a price, 1 Pet. 1:18. 'Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things,' &c. Sinners were the lawful captives of justice, Isa. 49:24. 'Shall the lawful captive be delivered?' And without shedding of blood there is no remission. This redemption consists of two parts. (1.) Deliverance

from evil. (2.) Restoration to the good lost. (1.) Deliverance from sin, the chief evil, Matth. 1:21. 'He shall save his people from their sins.' This is the house of bondage which our Redeemer finds all his people in, where they are in chains held fast to their drudgery. He came to deliver them and set them free from this slavery, Rom. 6:6, 7. 'Knowing this that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead, is freed from sin.' (2.) Deliverance from wrath, 1 Thess. 1 ult.—'Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come.' The wages of sin being death, even eternal destruction of the sinner in hell, all mankind were liable unto it: but now a ransom is paid, whereby there is purchased to sinners freedom from wrath, the taking off the sentence of death lying on them, whereby they were bound to everlasting misery.

2. Redemption includes in it a restoration to the good lost or a possession of all that happiness and all those blessings which men forfeited by the primitive transgression, which may all be summed up in eternal life, begun in every believer in this world, and perfected in the world of glory.

3. Who purchased this redemption. Even Jesus Christ, the Son, of God in our nature, 1 Thess. 1 ult. forecited. He took on him our nature, and became our near kinsman, that he might redeem the slaves and the captives, and redeem to them their mortgaged inheritance. For he made a full redemption, not only buying sinners from under the curse, but withal purchasing for them the blessing they had forfeited. This was a work too great for any lower person: rivers of oil would not have done it; the stock of angels could not have answered this strait of mankind. But God 'laid help upon one that is mighty,' Psal. 89:19.

4. What was the ransom paid. All that Christ did and suffered for sinners comes under the name of the ransom. For he himself was the ransom, 1 Tim. 2:6. 'Who gave himself a ransom for all.' He did not give gold, money, or lands, for us; for such mean things could not

have been accepted: but he gave himself for us: 'Who gave himself for me,' says Paul, Gal. 2:20. He gave body for body, soul for soul, bare our sins in his own body, and made his soul an offering for sin. And as our ransom,

(1.) He obeyed, gave punctual perfect obedience unto all the commands of the law, and so fulfilled all righteousness. Whereas we were born sinners, he was born holy; whereas we lived sinners, keeping none of the commands, he lived sinless, and kept them all. So that the law had all its demands of obedience from him.

(2.) He suffered and bare what the law threatened; and so satisfied justice in the room of sinners. Both these we have, Gal. 4:4, 5. 'When the fulness of time was come God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons,' Phil. 2:8. 'Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' Hence, when the scripture attributes our redemption to his blood, Eph. 1:7. 1 Pet. 1:18, 19 it is not to be understood exclusively of his obedience and other sufferings, but of his bloody death, which was the completing of the ransom; John 19:30. Jesus cried, 'It is finished:' and therefore his blood is named, as supposing the other parts of his obedience and sufferings; as if one should say, that a man is delivered from prison, by one's paying the utmost farthing for him.

5. For whom this redemption was purchased. The ransom paid was sufficient for the redemption of all mankind; but the elect only were actually redeemed; it was designed for them only; John 10:15. 'I lay down my life for the sheep.' Chap. 17:9. 'I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me.' It is certain that many perish, and that satisfaction is exacted of themselves for their own debt; so that if Christ died for them, he so far died in vain, Gal. 2:21 as I have formerly shewn at large.

II. As to the application of this redemption, consider,

1. What this application is. It is the actual interesting us in it, investing us in the possession of it, and making it effectual to us for the ends for which it was purchased; and therefore the text calls it a saving us. So the immediate consequent of this application is twofold.

1st. Deliverance from sin and the wrath of God, Rom. 6:18. 'Being made free from sin.' Chap. 8:1. 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' The chains of guilt binding over the sinner to God's wrath are broken off: the cords are loosed, and thrown away from the prisoner; he is freed from the slavery and reigning power of lusts, and so brought out of Satan's prison.

2dly, Restoration to peace with, and the favour of God, and to a right and title to heaven, and, in a word, being entitled to all the benefits of Christ's purchase, and actually enjoying them in our own persons. This is the effectual application of it to us, even as a salve applied heals the sore.

2. The necessity of this application. It is so necessary that none can have saying benefit by it until it be applied, John 1:12. In contemplation of the purchased redemption, the lives of the elect are spared, and they have means of grace given them, till they be brought in to Christ. But still in the mean time they are in a state of wrath, their sins are unpardoned, and they are without actual right to the inheritance of the saints. As a remedy cannot recover a man unless it be applied; so men must die eternally, notwithstanding the death of Christ, unless his redemption be applied to them in particular, for their recovery.

3. Who applies this redemption. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to apply it. The Father sent our Redeemer: the Son purchased our redemption; and the Holy Ghost applies it, as says the text. Our Lord Jesus is the royal Bridegroom; who offers himself and all his benefits unto sinners, upon their marriage with him; it is the Holy Spirit that

gains the sinner's consent, and so brings the soul to Christ, whereby it has interest in his purchase. Now,

1st. The outward means the Spirit makes use of for this end is the ministry of the word, 1 Cor. 3:5. This is suited to the nature of rational creatures, wherein their sin, danger, and need of Christ, his ability and willingness to save are laid before them, and they are invited and persuaded to accept of the Redeemer, who thereby comes to their prison doors, offering them liberty; and to their bedsides, offering healing. And faith comes by hearing.

2dly, There is a powerful operation of the Spirit on all the faculties of the soul that accompanies it, 1 Thess. 1:5, 6. 'Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.' Hereby the prison-doors are made to fly open, and the fetters to fly off, like Sampson's green withs from the devil's captive. A new light is let into the mind, the soul is made willing to be made the Lord's only, wholly, and for ever, Psal. 110:3. Phil. 2:13. The conscience is quickened, the affections are spiritualized, and the whole soul is affected, so as with heart and good will to embrace Christ. And this is the proper work of the Lord's Spirit. Who else can do it? who can take of Christ's and give to poor sinners, but the Spirit of Christ? John 16:26.

4. Whom does he apply it to. He applies it to those, and those only, for whom it was purchased; that is, to the elect, Acts 13:48. 'As many as were ordained unto eternal life, believed.' The Holy Spirit knows the deep things of God, was privy to the counsel of peace that passed betwixt the Father and the Son from eternity: the book of life is open to him, and agreeable thereto he manages his application. Such as fall away may have slight touches of the enlightening Spirit, but they never had the spirit of sanctification resting on them for this application.

The bargain betwixt Christ and an elect soul may get many backsets; sometimes it may seem to be going fair on, and sometimes to be broken off, without hope of ever coming to again: but he will never let it blow up for altogether, but will pursue it till it be an effectual match. We may say of the Spirit in this case as Naomi did to Ruth, 'The man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing,' Ruth 3 ult.

5. Lastly, Whether this application be completed at once or not. It is certain, that a whole Christ, with all his benefits, is at once made over to the sinner. But as certain it is, that there are many of these benefits which they are not presently put in possession of. And therefore the complete application comes not until the last day, which therefore is called our redemption-day, Eph. 4:30. Rom. 8:23. Hence the Spirit is still at work in believers carrying on this work, and will never leave it, till he have perfectly united them with him, and taken away every thing that occasions distance.

APPLICATION

USE. I. Of information. This lets us see,

1. We are poor miserable creatures without Christ, Rev. 3:17. That we need to be saved, speaks us to be lost; that we need to be redeemed, speaks us to be in bondage. O, sinner! know that while thou art out of Christ, thou art not a free man. Nay, (1.) Thou art a prisoner of justice; for thou hast broken the law, and thou art taken and bound as in a prison and canst not escape, Isa. 61:1. (2.) Thou art Satan's captive, ib. Satan made war against heaven, and engaging with innocent Adam, took him captive, and all of us in his loins; and behold thou art born and livest in captivity. (3.) Thou art the slave of sin, 2 Pet. 2:19. Thou canst do nothing but sin, and go the round from one sin to another; for that is the only work which Satan's captives get leave to work, Rom. 6:20.

2. See the need ye have of the application of Christ's redemption. Ye need to have an interest in Christ, to have Christ applied to your souls, as much as ever a poor captive needs the applying of a ransom, or the sick man of a remedy; without which the former must die in the pit, and the latter of his disease, without remedy. The ransom may be paid, and the remedy provided; but if they be not applied, it is all one to the captive and sick, as if there had been no ransom nor remedy.

3. See the happiness of the saints who are converted by the Spirit. Christ and all his purchase is theirs, 1 Cor. 3:22, 23. We may say of them as of the prodigal, they were lost, but now found; dead, but now alive; prisoners, but now at liberty, &c. Their guilt is now removed, the power of sin in them is broken, and the indwelling power thereof shall be taken away. Heaven is theirs, the mortgaged inheritance is bought back, and they are infeft in it.

4. The Holy Spirit is a divine person, not a divine attribute; for it is his office to apply Christ's redemption to sinners, which cannot agree but to a person. He is the third person in the Godhead, to whom we owe the same faith, worship, and obedience, as to the Father and the Son. And therefore it is a more justifiable way of speaking of the Spirit to speak of the Spirit as a person, he, than as of a thing, it.

5. There is an absolute need of the Spirit's powerful working on our souls, in order to salvation. Redemption is purchased by Christ; but unless the Spirit apply it to us, we cannot have saving benefit by it. We cannot move towards the Lord in conversion, but as we are moved; for we are dead, and 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth,' John 6:63. We are in darkness, it is the Spirit that enlightens. We are wayward, and will not turn, we must be made willing in a day of power. Therefore we have much need to seek the Spirit.

6. How just is the destruction of those that resist the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to apply Christ? If men will not have a remedy applied, they must die of their disease. If a captive will not have the

ransom applied to him, he must die in the pit, since he refuses to be loosed. They that fight against the Spirit in stifling their convictions, sinning against light, their damnation is most just. They run a most dangerous risk.

7. What a glorious and great work is the work of man's salvation! At the making of man there was, as it were, a consultation of the Trinity, but the work was soon done, Gen. 1:26, 27. 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.—So God created man in his own image.' But at the recovery of man, all hands were set to work (so to speak). The Father acts his part in chusing a certain number of the lost race to be partakers of his glory, giving them unto his Son for a people, and him to them for a Redeemer. The Son takes on their nature, and redeems them with his blood, and purchases eternal salvation for them. The Holy Spirit applies that purchase unto them, renewing their natures, quickening them, and knitting them to Christ as the Head of vital influences. O! should we not admire this great and glorious work?

8. Let the Lord himself have the glory of the conversion of souls. If it be by the Spirit that redemption is applied, then it is the Spirit himself, and not man, that makes himself to differ from others. It is not that one uses his free-will better than another, but that the free Spirit looses the bands from off the will in one, and not in another.

9. Lastly, We may hence learn the nature of the sin unto death; which, because it does in a special manner run cross to the operation of the Spirit, tending to the application of Christ's redemption to a sinner, is called 'the sin against the Holy Ghost;' and may be thus described:

It is a rejecting, opposing, and blaspheming, of Christ and the way of salvation through him, after a man hath been clearly convinced of the truth, and tasted the goodness thereof, by the inward operation of the Holy Ghost, and that deliberately, and wilfully, and avowedly,

out of malice and despite against Christ and his Holy Spirit. Here observe,

1. The object which this sin is conversant about. It strikes against the main part of the gospel, namely, Christ and the way of salvation by him. Hence they are said to 'crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame,' Heb. 6:6. Therefore, while one does not fly in the face of the way of salvation through Christ crucified, he cannot be thus guilty, though his sin be otherwise ever so heinous.

2. The actings of this forlorn sinner.

(1.) He rejects Christ, and the way of salvation through him. He will not be saved that way; he will rather run the risk of damnation than be obliged to Christ, or take him for his Saviour. Though he should die of his disease, he will not have Christ's redemption applied to him. If he has not professed that way in time past, he downright refuses it for the time to come, Matth. 12:24. Said the Pharisees to Christ, 'This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils;' intimating they would have no more to do with him then, but stand off from him, as one would from the prime agent of the prince of the devils. Or if they have professed that way, they renounce it, they 'fall away,' Heb. 6:6 not partially, but totally, quite given up with that way of salvation. Hence no person that does not quite renounce and refuse to be saved by Christ, can be guilty of this sin.

(2.) He does not only reject it for himself, but opposes it for others, using all his endeavours to root out the gospel from the earth by word and deed, pleading against that way, and persecuting it, as he has opportunity. As did the Pharisees, and those mentioned Heb. 6:6. They 'crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.' They would do it to him personally, and actually do it to him in his members. And so those who are not arrived at this height, cannot be guilty of this sin.

(3.) He not only rejects and opposes it, but blasphemes it, reproaches and rails against Christ, and the way of salvation through him. Hence it is called 'blasphemy,' Matt. 12:31 and 'speaking against the Holy Ghost,' ver. 32. So that neither are they guilty of this sin, that do not reproach and rail against the way of religion.

Now, this is horrible guilt; yet I must tell you, that a man may do all this, reject, oppose, and blaspheme Christ, and the way of salvation through him, and yet not be guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, though indeed they are fearful advances in the way to it. For Paul did all this before his conversion, yet 'obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief.' See Matt. 12:31. 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.' Therefore observe,

3. The qualifications of the party to whom this sin is incident. He is one that has been clearly convinced of the truth of the gospel, and has had a taste of the goodness of it by the inward operation of the Spirit. He plainly fights in this against his own conscience, and the witness of the Holy Spirit manifested unto him. Hence it is called 'speaking against the Holy Ghost,' Matt. 12:32 not so much against his person, as against and over the belly of his enlightening operation, not in others, but in himself. This our Lord, who knows men's hearts, discovered concerning those Pharisees mentioned Matth. 12. And Heb. 6:4, 5, 6 is plain to this purpose.

Hence those who remain under common ignorance of the truths of the gospel, and have never had an enlightening work on them, wherein, by the inward operation of the Spirit on their souls, the gospel-way of salvation has been particularly manifested to them, both in the truth and goodness thereof; those, I say are not capable of this sin.

But for a man thus qualified to reject and blaspheme Christ, is horrible; and yet even this will not conclude a person under the guilt of this sin. For some of the saints were by Paul, when a persecutor, 'compelled to blaspheme,' no doubt against the clear light within

their breasts, Acts 26:10, 11. Yet their sins were pardoned, as all the sins of the saints are. And hence we may conclude, that the blasphemies which poor souls are driven into by the horrible injections of, tossings and harrassings they have from the devil, in his hour and power of darkness, cannot be the sin against the Holy Ghost, nor unpardonable. Therefore we must take in,

4. Lastly, The properties of these actings of this forlorn sinner. All this is done, Christ and the way of salvation are rejected, opposed, and blasphemed, by this sinner.

(1.) Deliberately and wilfully, Heb. 10:26. 'If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.' It is done out of choice, not unadvisedly, rashly, and in the hurry of a temptation, from fear or constraint. Therefore no sin of indeliberation, or weakness, or that one is hurried into against his will in any measure, or ere he is aware, can be this unpardonable sin, however heinous otherwise it may be. For so Peter denied Christ, and these saints aforesaid blasphemed.

(2.) Avowedly. This forlorn sinner comes to the light with his sin; he does not commit it secretly within his own breast, but openly in the view of the world. It is an overt speech, act, or deed; as is manifest from Matth. 12:24. 'They said, this fellow casteth not out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils;' ver. 32. 'Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him.' Heb. 6:6. 'They put him to open shame.' Hence it is manifest, that no thought, how horrible soever, that passeth through the heart, which one is ashamed of, and sorrow for, and cannot avow, can be this sin; for that cannot be a 'putting Christ to open shame.' And,

(3.) Maliciously. He does not this of base fear, love to the world, or some such like motive; but out of pure malice against Christ his Spirit, and the way of salvation; Heb. 6:6. They 'crucify him, and put him to an open shame.' And 10:29. 'Who hath trodden under foot the Son of God,—and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace.' He is

one that is downright obstinate against the Lord, maliciously rejects the way of salvation, refuses contemptuously any benefit by Christ's blood, despitefully sets himself against the Spirit in his operations for application of Christ's redemption to him. In one word, he behaves like a desperate wounded man, who tears away the plaister from his wound, and throws it at the face of the surgeon who applied it, chusing rather to bleed to death, than be saved from death by him that made it, or applied it. This is the unpardonable sin, and the unpardonable sinner, whose case is absolutely hopeless.

Hence whatever your sin be, yet if you be grieved for it, and would be content to have mercy through Christ, or desire the application of his redemption, you are not guilty of this sin.

And thus you may see how this sin becomes unpardonable, and how it is impossible to renew such again unto repentance; namely, that as the case of the sick man is desperate, who rejects the remedy, and sets himself maliciously against the physician; so that soul's case must be utterly hopeless, which maliciously, wilfully and avowedly, rejects, opposes, and blasphemes Christ the only sacrifice, and the Holy Ghost the only Sanctifier. For if one will by no means have Christ, he must needs perish, for there is no other sacrifice if they despitefully refuse his Spirit, there is no other Sanctifier. How then can they be pardoned, or brought to repentance? If one sin against the Father, as a Lawgiver, the satisfaction of the Son can take away that sin; if one sin against the Son, by unbelief or otherwise, the Holy Spirit can by his grace cure him of that; but if one will needs do despite to the Spirit of grace, and maliciously set himself against his application of Christ's redemption, there is no more hope; since there is not another person in the Godhead to cure this.

USE II. Of trial. Te may try by this, whether ye be partakers of Christ's redemption or not, namely, if the Spirit has effectually applied it unto you. For there is no other way of partaking of it; and this never misgives. I shall give you the following marks of the Spirit's application.

Mark 1. Where the Spirit applies Christ's redemption, the wound is fully opened, and then Christ's redemption is fully applied, Luke 6:48. 1 Cor. 1:30. Where the work is not carried through by the Spirit, either the soul's wound is so laid open that the sinner despairs, and there is no application of Christ, as in the case of Judas; or else it is not enough opened and laid out, sins of the heart, and particularly the sin of one's nature, are not so discovered, as to convince the soul of its utter impotency to good. Hence Christ is not applied for sanctification, as well as for justification, and so not truly applied at all. But where the wound is laid open sufficiently, both in point of guilt, which the soul sees it can by no means remove, and in point of utter natural corruption, which the soul sees it cannot help; and withal the soul is brought to Christ both for righteousness and sanctification, to close with him, and depend on him for both; there the Spirit has applied Christ's redemption (1 Cor. 1:30.), laying the plaister to in the full breadth of the sore.

Mark 2. Where there is a begun delivery from the power of sin, the reign of it is broken, it has not the soul at its beck as before, Rom. 6:14. It is true sin may prevail, because the power of it is not entirely broken, the application not being yet perfect. But the heart is habitually loosed from sin, longing to be rid of it, and endeavouring to be freed of the bonds, as the captive casting off his chains when he is coming forth of the prison, and Lazarus raised leaving his dead-clothes, Rom. 7:24.

USE III. Of exhortation, in two branches.

First, Be deeply concerned for the application of Christ's redemption unto yourselves. Seek it, and be not satisfied without it. Make it your greatest care to be partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ. To press this, I offer the following motives.

Mot. 1. Consider what a great redemption it is, Heb. 2:3. It is a redemption from the greatest evils, sin, and the wrath of God;—of the greatest benefits, peace with God, pardon, and eternal life;—

performed by the greatest of persons, the Son of God; and could be performed by no lesser one, being above the reach of angels and men;—purchased by the paying of the greatest ransom, the blood of God.

Mot. 2. Some are made partakers of it. So says the text. The door of the treasure-house is opened to some, and they are brought in, and do partake of it. There have been before you, who have been dying of their wounds, as ye are now, and by the application of it they have been recovered, 1 Cor. 6:11. Up then, and put in for a shave in this glorious redemption.

Mot. 3. Ye need it as well as others, Eph. 2:3. Are not ye as well as others naturally justice's prisoners, Satan's captives, and sin's slaves? Ye cannot deliver yourselves more than others could ye must perish in the pit, if ye be not partakers of this redemption. And ye are not able to bear the weight of wrath more than others. O let not your need prompt you on to it!

Mot. 4. It is in your offer this day. Our Lord is crying to you by the gospel, 'Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope; even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee,' Zech. 9:12. The physician is come to your bed-sides, offering you his never-failing medicines. All the benefits of Christ's purchase are offered to you. They cost him dear, but he offers them freely, though the price of blood to him: Isa. 55:1. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.'

Mot. 5. You will have no saving benefit by it, if it be not applied to you, John 8:24. What will it avail you, that Christ died for the sins of his people, if ye have no interest in his death? ye must die for your own sins, and bear your own burden for evermore. There is a physician indeed; but what will ye be the better, if ye do not employ him? What though ye get his directions in the gospel? If ye do not make use of the remedy, ye will die of your disease.

Mot. 6. Nay, it will be worse for you than if there had been no redemption purchased, Heb. 2:3. 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' Matth. 11:24. (It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom (says Christ to Capernaum) in the day of judgment, than for thee.' It will aggravate your condemnation, that there was a ransom paid, and it was in your power, but ye slighted it. O how fearful is the slight given to the price of blood, the blood of the Son of God! The Mediator's vengeance will pursue such. And, as a thousand worms, it will at last gnaw the consciences of those that slighted it.

Mot. 7. Lastly, It will not always be in your offer, Luke 14:24, 25. Behold, now is the day of salvation. The time comes when the market of free grace will be over, and if one would ever so fain have it, they shall not get it. Therefore delay not. Ye know not but it may be out of your reach to-morrow; for ye have no reason to boast of to-morrow, as ye know not what a day may bring forth.

2dly, As ever ye would have the redemption purchased by Christ applied to you, and would not mar that application,

1. Beware of that treatment of the Spirit, which has a tendency thereto, yea, and leads the way to the great transgression. And beware of,

1st. Resisting the Spirit, Acts 7:51 but rather fall in with him in his operations. To stave off convictions, and guard against awakenings out of a state of sin, to sin against the light, and inward checks, and to go on obstinately in sin, in opposition to calls to repentance, is to resist the Spirit. And that is most dangerous, as dangerous as for the sick man to resist the physician that would apply healing plaisters to his sores, and so fight, against his own welfare.

2dly, Quenching the Spirit, 1 Thess. 5:19. Sometimes this holy fire begins to burn, and ye may find the heat of it: O then take heed as one who is upon the point of cure, that ye do not mar it! Do not cast water on this fire to drown it out, by sinning against light, putting out

your convictions out of your hearts and heads, by sinning with a strong hand, or filling up your thoughts with worldly business, drowning them by sinful pleasures, &c. Withdraw not fuel from this fire, by neglecting the motions and operations of the Spirit. Do not smother it, by not giving them vent in prayer, and supplication, and confession before God, or in consulting with his servants in cases wherein ye need particular direction. O, why will ye ruin yourselves, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life?

3dly, Grieving the Spirit, Eph. 4:30. Even believers themselves have need of the Spirit for carrying on this work of application of Christ's redemption. And they are in hazard of retarding and interrupting it, by their grieving the Spirit by gross sins, which in a special manner defile the conscience, or by sins, though smaller in their nature, yet attended with great aggravations, or by not valuing and esteeming the Spirit's graces, comforts, influences, and ordinances. These things provoke the Spirit to withdraw; and so the application of the redemption is not advanced.

4thly, Vexing the Spirit, Isa. 63:10. It is true, the Spirit of the Lord is not subject to passions; for these are inconsistent with the infinite happiness of God; and so he cannot properly be grieved or vexed, nor disturbed. But men are said to vex the Spirit, when they treat him so as would vex one capable of vexation. This is done by often falling into the same sins, Numb. 14:22 especially falling into them again after a person has been convinced of the evil of them, confessed, mourned for them, and resolved against them; and much more when, besides all this, they have smarted for them. This is the great trial of divine patience, a tempting of God, and puts men in great hazard of being given up of God, Numb. 14:27.

Lastly, Blaspheming the Spirit in his operations. This is done by mocking at religion, or the work of the Spirit of the Lord, in others: A dangerous business, as these young blasphemers felt, 2 Kings 2:23, 24. 'And Elisha went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city,

and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald-head, Go up, thou bald-head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord: and there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.' Or by fathering the operations of the Spirit in ourselves or others, on some other cause, as when religion is counted folly, soul-exercise melancholy or distraction, and communion with God delusion. Thus the Spirit, as the Spirit of regeneration and of prayer, is often blasphemed.

2. As ever ye would have the redemption purchased by Christ applied to you, labour to get the Spirit; make it your business to get him to dwell in you, and work in you. Lay out yourselves to be his habitation. Consider,

Mot. 1. Ye are by nature without the Spirit, Jude, 19 therefore ye have need to seek him. The highest principle of acting in you is your own spirit, which is so corrupted that it can do nothing truly good, John 15:5. And being without the Spirit, ye are without God in the world, and therefore without hope, while ye are so.

Mot. 2. Ye can have no saving benefit by Christ but by the Spirit. Ye can have no interest in Christ without him, Rom. 8:9 and no access to God through Christ, but by him, Eph. 2:18. While ye have not the Spirit, the redemption is indeed purchased, but, alas! it is not applied to you. Christ has died, but you have no interest in him, no saying benefit by him. There is a full treasure of grace in Christ, but, alas! ye want the key to open it. The bridegroom stands ready to receive you, but there is none to bring the bride to him, and she cannot go her alone.

Mot. 3. Without the Spirit ye are spiritually dead in sin, John 6:63. When the soul is away, the body is dead; and when the Spirit is away, the soul is dead. The man cannot move in God's way, cannot perform one duty acceptably; for nothing is so but what is done in the Spirit, John 4:24. Hence all ordinances and providences are lost on such an

one; for he is like a dead tree, to which spring and winter are alike. Hence,

Mot. 4. Without the Spirit ye are undone for ever; without the Spirit, without Christ, Rom. 8:9 without Christ, without God; and without God, without hope; therefore 'aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise,' Eph. 2:12. The dead corpse may be kept a while; but when there are no hopes of the returning of the soul, it is buried in a grave: so without the Spirit ye may be kept a while, through God's patience; but the end will be, to be cast into the pit, and buried out of God's sight.

Mot. last. If ye get the Spirit, ye are made up for ever. For he is the leading benefit of Christ's purchase, which all the rest infallibly follow, Zech. 12:10. When the Spirit comes, life comes, that shall never fail, John 4:14. He will unite you to Christ, and then all is yours. He will enlighten, quicken, renew and sanctify you, subdue your corruptions, give grace, actuate and increase it, change you from glory to glory, and raise up your bodies at the last day to glory, Rom. 8:11.

I shall conclude all with a few directions.

1. Pray earnestly for the Spirit, Luke 11:13. God has made a promise of the Spirit, and gives that as a ground of your prayer for him, Ezek. 36:27, 37. 'A new Spirit will I put within you.—I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.' And although God regard not prayer as performed by one without the Spirit, yet he regards it as a means and ordinance of his own appointment, whereby the Spirit is conveyed into the hearts of his elect.

2. Wait and look for the Spirit in all ordinances of his appointment, Isa. 32 ult. They that would have the wind blow upon them, go out into the open air; though they cannot raise it, they wait where it blows, John 3:8. Especially the preaching of the gospel is to be attended diligently for this end, 2 Cor. 3:8. The man that had lain

many years at the pool, at length saw the time that the angel moved the waters.

3. Lastly, Give up yourselves to the Spirit, Jer. 31:18. Lay yourselves down at his feet, to be enlightened, quickened, and sanctified by him. Open the door of your hearts to receive him. And when the least good motion is found kindled in your hearts, cherish it as a tender bud of heaven; nourish the spark, and it will increase into a flame.

OF UNION WITH CHRIST

1 CORINTHIANS 12:13.—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.

THE apostle in the preceding verse having asserted, that Christ mystical, i. e. Christ and believers, are one, making but one mystical body, in the words of the text does at once explain and confirm the same from the two sacraments of the New Testament, baptism, and the Lord's supper.

1. From the sacrament of baptism, where he shews us the blessed union made. And here consider,

1st. The parties united: on the one hand, we all; viz. who believe in Christ, as distinguished from unbelievers. On the other hand, Jesus Christ, whom he had just before mentioned, and who is here understood as implied in the one body, whereof he is the head, or principal part.

2dly, The uniting or joining of the parties, which is expressed by being baptized into one body, the sacramental sign being put for the thing signified: as if he had said, we are united into one body with Christ, which is signified and sealed by our baptism.

3dly, The efficient cause of the union, or the party uniting us to Christ, one Spirit, the one Spirit of Christ. It is by him we are baptized, and are joined to Christ. He casts the indissoluble knot; as Christ brings us to the Father, the Holy Spirit brings us to Christ, by faith which he works in us, and makes the marriage-tie between the King of saints and the daughter of Zion. This Spirit must needs be the infinite Spirit of God, since it is but one Spirit that knits all, not only as the author, but the bond of the union.

4thly, The result of this union, one body. Hence it comes to pass, that Christ and all believers are one mystical body; they are all joined to Christ and among themselves, as the head and members.

5thly, The character of the parties whom the Spirit unites to Christ. He confines not himself to any one party of sinners in the world, but takes them indifferently out of all sorts, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, whether they be bond or free men. He goes to unbelieving Jews that had rejected Christ for some time, and to unbelieving Gentiles that had not heard of him. And he unites them to Christ by working faith in them; for he deals with them that have reason, not as with stocks, knitting them without any action of their own, but as rational creatures, apprehending them, and working faith in them, whereby they apprehend Christ.

2. From the sacrament of the Lord's supper, where he shews us the blessed fruit of this union, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit, Here consider,

1st. The common benefit, the purchase of Christ's redemption; one Spirit, the leading comprehensive purchase of Christ's death. This is that Spirit poured out on Christ without measure, to be communicated for life, and supplies of life, to all that come to him.

2dly, The participation of that benefit, which is expressed by being made to drink into one Spirit, the sacramental sign for the thing signified: As if he had said, We all partake of Christ's Spirit more and

more to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, which is as necessary to us as drink to strengthen our bodies, which is signified and sealed by the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

3dly, The parties made partakers thereof, we all, who are united to Christ. As life goes before eating or drinking, so the union with Christ goes before communion in and partaking of the benefits of his redemption; and the former is the cause of the latter.

Hence we may see, That 'the Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.'

The great subject to be handled here, is the union betwixt Christ and believers. And here let us consider,

I. How Christ's redemption is applied to a sinner.

II. Shew that there is a real union betwixt Christ and believers.

III. What is that union.

IV. What are the bonds of it.

V. Who is the author and efficient cause of it.

VI. The properties of it.

VII. Apply.

1. Let us consider how Christ's redemption is applied to a sinner. It is done by way of uniting the sinner to Christ, as a plaister is applied to a sore, by laying the one upon the other. A sinner is interested in, and put in possession of Christ's redemption through union with him, 1 Cor. 1:30. 'Of him are ye in Christ Jesus.' Men must not think to stand afar from Christ, and partake of the benefits of his death, upon their praying to him for it, as the beggar on his crying gets of

the rich man's money thrown to him; which I observe is the soul ruining notion many have of this matter. But he must unite with Christ, and so partake of the redemption purchased by Christ, as the poor widow drowned in debt, by marrying the rich man, is interested in his substance. It is with Christ himself that all saving benefits are given, Rom. 8:32; and without him none such are received. Believe it, Sirs, that as Adam's sin could never have hurt you, unless ye had been in him, so Christ's redemption shall never savingly profit you, unless ye be in him, Eph. 1:7. 'In whom we have redemption through his blood.' I shall next shew,

II. That there is a real union betwixt Christ and believers. Some, to advance their legal scheme of doctrine, acknowledge no other union but a relative one betwixt Christ and believers, such as may be betwixt persons and things wholly separated. But that there is a real, true, and proper union betwixt Christ and believers, is evident if ye consider,

1. The several equivalent terms by which this union is expressed in scripture. Christ is said to be in believers, Col. 1:27. Rom. 8:10 and they in him, 1 Cor. 1:30. He is said to dwell in them, and they in him, John 6:56. They are said to abide in one another, John 15:4. Believers have put on Christ, Gal. 3:27. They are so joined, or agglutinated, as to be one Spirit, 1 Cor. 6:17. To expound these of a mere relative union, such as is betwixt a king and his subjects, a master and his servants, is but to wrest scripture, and these phrases applied to such relatives would be extremely harsh, though they never so much agreed in judgment and affection.

2. The several real and proper unions which it is resembled to. It is resembled unto that betwixt the vine and the branches, John 15:5 the head and the body, Eph. 1:22, 23 meat eaten and the eater, John 6:56 yea, to that betwixt the Father and Christ, John 17:21. These are real proper unions, and so is this.

3. Lastly, If this union be not a true and real one, but a mere relative one, the sacrament of the supper is but a bare sign, and not a seal, exhibiting and applying Christ to believers. For without this real union, the feeding on Christ's body and blood truly and really in the sacrament cannot be; which yet is the doctrine of the scriptures, and of our Larger Catechisms, proved from the words of institution, 'Take, eat, this is my body.' For if there be a true and real feeding, there must be a true and real union, as there is betwixt the food and our bodies into which it is incorporated.

III. I proceed to shew what is that union that takes place betwixt Christ and believers. There are three mysterious unions in our religion. (1.) The substantial union of the three persons in one Godhead. (2.) The personal union of the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ. (3.) The mystical union betwixt Christ and believers, which is that wherein Christ and believers, are so joined, that they are one Spirit, and one mystical body, 1 Cor. 6:17 and 12:13.

In this union the whole man is united to a whole Christ. The believing soul is united to him, Eph. 3:17. His body also is united to him, 1 Cor. 6:19. 1 Thess. 4:14. They are united to him in his divine nature, Col. 1:27 and in his human nature, Eph. 5:30 and so through the Mediator unto God, 2. Cor. 6:16.

IV. I go on to shew what are the bonds of this union, whereby Christ and believers become one. All corporal union is made by contact; but Christ is in heaven, and we on earth, and so we can have no such union with him; and if we had, what would it profit? John 6:63. But this union is spiritual, 1 Cor. 6:17 and so are the bonds of it. And they are two.

1. The Spirit on Christ's part, whereby he apprehendeth, taketh and keepeth hold of us, 1 John 3 ult. The same infinite Spirit that dwells in Christ, he communicates to his elect in their effectual calling, Ezek. 36:27. So that one Spirit living and acting in both, in Christ as the head, and in believers as the members, they truly become one by

that means. And the distance betwixt Christ and believers, as great as is betwixt heaven and earth, cannot hinder the joining of our souls and bodies to his, since the Spirit is an infinite Spirit, everywhere present. And seeing the same Spirit is in both, they are thereby made really one, notwithstanding the distance; even as if there were a man standing on the earth whose head should reach the stars; yet since one soul animates his head and feet, notwithstanding the distance betwixt them, (as well as those of the lowest dwarf), they do still make but one body. And as in the case of a tree-leg fixed to the body, and touching upon it, it is not for all that a part of the body, because it is not animated by the soul; so, on the other hand, where one spirit is in two, there is a real union, although these two do not touch one another, as in the case of Ezekiel's wheels, Ezek. 1:21. All which shews that there is nothing contrary to reason in this union.

2. Faith on the believer's part, Eph. 3:17. 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.' Thereby the believer apprehends, takes, and keeps hold of Christ. It is by that we receive Christ, John 1:12 come unto him, John 6:35 and feed on him, ver. 56. This faith is that true one, whereby a sinner heartily receives and rests on Christ for all his salvation. And no distance can hinder it to ascend unto the Mediator.

Now, since Christ cannot be seen with our eyes, nor touched with our hands, while he is in heaven and we are on earth, and that he is not known to us but by his word of the gospel, what other way can we unite with him, but believing on this unseen Christ? So that faith is the only mean on our part. And its fitness for this work appears, if ye consider,

(1.) That faith is a self-emptying and creature-emptying grace, throwing off and putting away all those things that might keep the soul at a distance from Christ, Phil. 3:8. And,

(2.) It is as much fitted to receive an unseen Christ and salvation, which appears to us only in the word, as the hand to receive what can be received into it. For in the word Christ offers himself and all his

salvation to us, which we cannot lay hold of by any bodily action whatsoever; but faith crediting the testimony, consenting to, and resting on the offered Christ, with his salvation, does actually get the same, as sure as there is truth in the word of the gospel.

V. The next head is to shew who is the author and efficient cause of this union. The party that makes this blessed union is the Holy Spirit of Christ, and none other, as the text tells us. As our Lord Jesus Christ took his own human nature into personal union with him, in the womb of the virgin Mary, by the agency of the Spirit, the Holy Ghost coming upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowing her, Luke 1:35 so he takes sinners into mystical union with him, by the agency of this same Spirit. We may take it up thus:

1. The Spirit of Christ comes in the word, and enters into the heart of the elect sinner dead in sin. The word is the great vehicle of divine appointment, wherein the Spirit is given, Gal. 3:2. And in that he comes and makes room for himself, and takes it up, 1 Thess. 1:5. John 6:63. And the Spirit is a Spirit of life, a Spirit of faith, and one with Christ, as he is one of the three persons in the one Godhead. So that when he is come into the soul, it is quickened, changed, regenerated, and really united to Christ passively, in so far as the Spirit is Christ's Spirit.

2. That quickening Spirit now entered into the elect soul works faith in it; and thus only true faith is wrought, not from our natural powers, Eph. 2:8. Col. 2:12. Hereby the soul lays hold on Christ, and actually unites with him. Being quickened and actuated by the Spirit, it acts in believing.

The whole may be illustrated by the case of Lazarus rising from the dead. With the voice of Christ, 'Lazarus come forth,' his soul re-entered into his body, so he was alive again; and being alive and quickened, he moved and came forth unto Christ. So the dead soul, being quickened by the Spirit coming into it, moves and comes into Christ. And thus ye may see,

That there is a twofold receiving of Christ. (1.) A passive receiving of him, wherein Christ comes in by his Spirit into the dead soul, quickening it, and joins himself unto that soul. Here the soul does nothing, but is inhabited by Christ, through the Spirit, which disposeth the sinner to believe. And this is the case of gracious infants, who are truly united to Christ, though because of their infancy they cannot act faith. (2.) An active receiving of him, when the soul having faith wrought in it by the Spirit actually believes, and receives Christ, putting forth the hand of the soul to embrace him, and so actively joins itself unto the Lord.

VI. I proceed to show the properties of this union. I have anticipated some of these, under other heads already, and shown you that it is,

1. A true, real, and proper union, not a mere relative one.
2. A spiritual union, 1 Cor. 6:17. 'He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit.' Though it is an union of bodies as well as of spirits, yet the union is not corporal, for the bodies do not touch one another; but spiritual, being joined by spiritual bands. I add, that it is,
3. A mysterious union. The apostle calls it a 'great mystery,' Eph. 5:32; 'a glorious mystery,' Col. 1:27.—And therefore, by the by, it is not a mere relative union, but a true and real one; for a relative union betwixt Christ and believers, is no mystery, but a plain truth easily acknowledged by all, and perceived. But there is need of a true, lively, humble faith to believe this, which is so far above the reach of our natural capacities, and which natural reason is so ready to object against; but faith will believe it over all these impediments.
4. A most close and intimate union. They are joined as those things that are glued together, 1 Cor. 6:17. The believer has Christ in him, and he is in Christ; and they are united as the meat with the body, which is incorporated into it, John 6:56. See Eph. 5:30.
5. An indissoluble union. Once in Christ, ever in him, John 10:28, 29. What man will lose a member of his body, if he can help it? Who then

can imagine that Christ will lose a member of his? The apostle bids a defiance to all things for separating the saints from the love of Christ, and consequently from union with him, that is the ground of the love of complacency, Rom. 8:35, &c. This union abides uninterrupted by death: for sleeping saints sleep in Christ, while in the grave, 1 Thess. 4:14.

6. Lastly, It is the leading, comprehensive, fundamental privilege of believers, 1 Cor. 3:23. 'Ye are Christ's.' All their other privileges are derived from and grafted upon this, their justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification. All these grow on this root; and where that is wanting, none of these can be. All acceptable obedience comes from the soul's union with Christ, John 15:4. Hence faith is the principal grace, as uniting us to Christ.

I proceed now to the application of this subject. I shall press out the juice of this pomegranate unto you in uses of information, trial, and exhortation.

USE I. Of information. It informs us,

1. Concerning the saints in general, that they are highly dignified beyond all the rest of the world. They are all members of Christ, of the blood royal of heaven, even those of them that some would disdain to rub shoulders with, Eph. 5:30. And thus we have these lessons.

(1.) Wo to those that maltreat, oppress, or persecute any of the saints; for what they do against them, they do against Christ, as doing it to the members of Christ's body, Acts 9:4. And he will resent it, and plead the cause as his own cause, accurately and exactly, so as to make men accountable for omissions of duty to them, far more for commissions of evil against them, Matth. 25:42–45. So that the Saints have good reason to lay aside all thoughts of revenge; for their Redeemer is mighty.

(2.) They are the best bestowed good turns that are done to the godly for Christ's sake. For as they are done to them, they are done to Christ, since they are one with him. And our Lord will take it so, and graciously reward it, Mat. 15:35–39. Therefore the apostle gives that exhortation, Gal. 6:10. 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.' Have ye any love to Christ? love is communicative; ye cannot reach the Head, but the members ye have always with you. Say not then ye want occasion to testify your love to him. It is the best seed ye can sow and will bring the most plentiful harvest.

(3.) Believers are members one of another, Eph. 4:25.—There is a true and real sibness betwixt all the godly, as there is betwixt the legs and arms of one body, or one leg and another. For since they are all united to Christ, it necessarily follows that they are all united among themselves, 1 Cor. 12:12. And therefore they are called 'one bread,' having an union and communion among themselves, sealed by the sacrament. O! if this great truth were believed, what love, what sympathy, what care for one another's temporal and spiritual welfare would there be among the godly! There would not be such strangeness, alienation of affections, nor such a Cain like unconcernedness about one another among them.

(4.) It is a thankless office to rend and divide the church of Christ, to tear Christ's seamless coat. Many make no bones of separating from, but place religion in, casting off, communion with those, who, their consciences must acknowledge, do yet remain united to Christ. They say, they can have no communion with them without sin. I grant, that if one leg go into a mire and be defiled, the other ought not to follow, nor one saint communicate with another in sin; ay, but no man in his wits would cut off either of the legs in that case. But the body of Christ is not so tenderly handled, though we owe more tenderness to it than to our natural bodies. Nay, but let men abhor communion with such as much as they will, they shall either have the most close and intimate communion with them, or they shall have none with Christ, forasmuch as there are not two Christ's to head the

separate bodies; and if they be both united to one Christ, they have the most intimate union and communion one with another.

2. It informs us concerning some great and weighty principles of our holy religion, clearly deducible from this grand point.

(1.) The saints shall persevere in grace, and can never totally nor finally fall away from it. For there is an indissoluble union betwixt Christ and them. This secures the believer's life, that it can never be lost, Col. 3:3. The Spirit, the bond of this union, never leaves his habitation, John 14:16 and 4:14. This keeps a seed always in him for God, 1 John 3:9. And Christ will lose none of his members, John 17:12. It is true, if the firmness of this union depended entirely on the hold the sinner has of Christ by faith, it might be broke; but it depends on the hold that Christ has of the sinner by his Spirit, as the nurse has of the babe in her arms.

(2.) Faith in Christ is the great comprehensive gospel-duty. Many have mean thoughts of faith, in comparison of other duties. But the scripture gives it the preference, John 6:29. 1 John 3:23. When we bid you believe, we bid you get all privileges, and do all duties; for believing is the way to both, in so far as it unites the soul to Christ, which is the fundamental privilege of the saints. If ye believe, ye do all in effect, as he who takes hold of the first link of a chain, has hold of all the links. If ye believe not, ye do nothing; for without faith, ye are without Christ, and without Christ ye can do nothing, John 15:5 compare Heb. 11:6.

(3.) There is a solid rational ground for the doctrine of our justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ. Let profane men deride it as a putative or imaginary righteousness and justification, to make way for their own works; and let the corrupters of the Protestant doctrine set up faith, repentance, and new obedience, as our evangelical righteousness, upon which we are justified, as the fulfilling of the gospel-law; we need no other righteousness for justification but Christ's. For a believer is by faith united to Christ.

Having this union with him, we have a communion with him in his righteousness, which is ours, since we are one with him, and being ours, must be imputed to us, or reckoned ours on the most solid ground. Christ is the believer's Surety by his own voluntary act, the debtor's consent by faith, the Judge's approbation in the word. What then is more rational than that this righteousness be imputed to the believer, and he thereupon justified?

(4.) The way to obtain true repentance and sanctification, is to believe. For these are the benefits of Christ's redemption, Acts 5:31. Matth. 1:21 and these are applied by the Spirit working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling. How can one think to repent truly, or to be holy, when he is not united to Christ, John 15:5 or to be united without faith? As soon shall the falling dew pierce through the rock, as one shall be able to do any of these out of Christ, whom the Father has constituted the head of influences, and on whom all our fruitfulness depends.

(5.) Lastly, The bodies of believers shall have a glorious resurrection, Rom. 8:11. There is an union betwixt Christ and the bodies of believers, which death does not break off, 1 Thess. 4:14 and therefore they shall not always lie in the dust; nor will Christ lose any of his members. The Lord says to a dying saint as to Jacob, Gen. 46:3, 4. 'I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt [the grave]—I will go down with thee into Egypt [the grave]; and I will also surely bring thee up again.'

3. This doctrine informs us concerning the happiness of the saints. To be united with Christ is the foundation of all happiness, and the richest privileges.

(1.) Christ is theirs, Cant. 2:16. 'My Beloved is mine,' says the spouse. They have an interest in his person. He is their Lord, their Elder Brother, their Husband, yea, their Head. Whatsoever he is, or is in him, they may reckon upon it as theirs, for to make them happy. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in him, and so God is their God and

their Father, John 20:17. His mercy is theirs to pity them, his power to protect them, his all-seeing eye to direct them, &c. Thus they have a fountain to go to that never runs dry, a treasure that is never exhausted, a table that will never be drawn, &c.

(2.) What Christ has is theirs, and he is the heir of all things, so all is theirs, 1 Cor. 3:22, 23. He has all that has him to whom all things belong. Union infers a communion betwixt Christ and believers. His active and passive obedience is theirs for their justification, as if they had done it themselves. His Spirit, word, and providences, are theirs for their sanctification. His power in heaven is theirs for their glorification. In a word, his broad covenant, with all the precious promises in it, is theirs to make them happy here and hereafter, 2 Pet. 1:4.

(3.) They are perfectly safe from the wrath of God, Rom. 8:1. 'There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' Their sins are still very displeasing in the sight of God, and deserve condemnation as well as those of others. But being in Christ, they are beyond the reach of the curse of the law; they are got into the city of refuge, where the avenger of blood cannot attack them. They are under the mild government of the covenant of grace, which threatens fatherly anger and temporal chastisements in case of transgression, but no more, Psal. 89:30–33.

(4.) The Lord takes pleasure in and accepts their persons, graces and duties, though attended with manifold imperfections. Their persons are accepted, though a body of death hangs about them, Eph. 1:6. Their graces, though there is much dross in them, yet because the image of Christ is on them, they are accepted, Cant. 5:1. Their duties, though far from the perfection which the law requires, are accepted, Cant. 2:14. Their will is accepted for the deed, and their grief for the want of will, for the will itself, 2 Cor. 8:12.

(5.) All their wants lie upon Christ, Col. 2:10. As the union gives them a communion with him in what is his, so he has a communion with

them in what is theirs; so that Christ is to answer for all their debt, poverty, and wants, as he that marries the widow in debt, Psal. 55:22. So they look and may look to him for all, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

USE II. Ye may try by this, whether the Spirit has applied to you the redemption purchased by Christ. If so be, then ye are united to Christ. If men only apply that redemption to themselves, it will be found presumption, and not faith, and no union with Christ; and the plaister thus applied will not stick. But where the right application is made, there the sinner is united to Jesus Christ. Ye may try whether ye be united to Christ or not by these marks. The general Mark is, If ye be disjoined from what ye were formerly knit to, and carried to Christ for all. It is with the soul united to Christ as with an ingrafted branch, which is broken from off the tree it naturally grew on, and is joined to another, from which it draws all the sap. If ye be united to Christ, ye are disjoined and broken off from the natural stock, and ingrafted into Christ. Ye may take up this in these three things.

1. Ye have given up with the law as a covenant of works, and betaken yourselves wholly to the grace of Christ in the second covenant. That is to be 'dead to the law, and married to Christ' Rom. 7:4. Ye are broken off from all your natural confidences before the Lord, founded on anything whatsoever that is not Christ or in Christ, and lay your whole confidence before the Lord on him. So that he is your all in point of confidence before the throne, Phil. 3:8. This is a sure evidence, Phil. 3:3; Matth. 5:3. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit;' where it is observable, that this leads the way, and is to be carried through all the rest of the duties and graces following. This is the very nature of faith as it unites to Christ.

2. Your hearts are separated and disjoined from sin, and labouring to take up their everlasting rest in Christ, as the centre of your desires, Psalm 119:128 and 73:25. Men's desires naturally go out after the world and their lusts, and if they have any desires after Christ, it is but a desire of him together with their lusts. But grace turns the

heart against these, and kindles desires of Christ, instead of lusts, Matth. 13:45, 46. This is a sure evidence, Matth. 5:6. It is true, while here the saints are not separated from sin in action, Psal. 65:3. But in affection they are, Rom. 7:24 and in that respect Christ has the crown, and lusts the cross, Gal. 5:24. And thus God judges of them, 2 Cor. 8:12. 'For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.'

3. Ye are carried out of yourselves into Jesus Christ, Matth. 16:24. To a natural man his sweet self is his all; but grace turns self off the throne, and sets up Christ in its stead. While the man is separated from Christ, he has separate interests from him: but when united to Christ, these are all swallowed up in Christ's interest, as the rivers, when they go into the sea, have no more their separate channels. Ye know the difference betwixt a married and an unmarried woman. The unmarried woman lives upon her own, and pleases herself; the married lives on her husband's, and pleases him. Such is the difference betwixt one separated from, and one united to Christ, Psal. 45:10.

(1.) The soul in a state of separation from Christ lives on its own, acts from itself as the highest principle, stands on its own legs, as it were, and takes its own weight to bear (Prov. 28:26.) in point of sanctification. It is like that nominal marriage, Isa. 4:1. 'And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.' And therefore such a one is called 'sensual, having not the spirit,' Jude, ver. 19 one that has no higher principle than his own soul.

The soul united to Christ lives on his, or by him, John 6:57. Being sensible of its utter impotency for good, it flees to him, his Spirit and grace, and relies on him for strength, Jer. 31:18. This is the life of faith. The one, like Goliath, goes forth in confidence of his strength, sword, and spear; the other, like the stripling David, goes forth in the name of the Lord. This is a sure evidence, Phil. 3:3; Cant. 8:5.

(2.) The man in a state of separation lives for himself, as his chief end, in point of sanctification too, Hos. 10:1. In what good he does, his great end is to serve and please himself, not to serve and please the Lord. And it can be no otherwise with the natural man; for as the mouth of a river can be no higher than its spring, so he that acts from himself can never but act for self. And thus God regards not their service.

But the man united to Christ lives to the Lord, Rom. 14:7, 8, Phil. 1:21. The gracious soul, like the married woman, cares how to please her husband, would fain be holy, and endeavours to be so, that she may be like him. The soul united to Christ is not barren of good works, John 15:5; but brings them forth to him, Rom. 7:4; the great end of their duties being not to content themselves, but to walk before him in all well-pleasing. This also is a sure evidence, Phil. 1:21. 'To me to live is Christ.'

USE ult. Of exhortation. O be exhorted,

1. To be deeply concerned for union with Christ. O, sinner, take no rest till thou be in him. Seek to unite with him, and live no longer in a state of separation from him. To press this, consider,

Mot. 1. Thou may be doing, but thou canst do nothing to purpose, while not united to Christ, John 15:5. None of thy duties will be accepted of God, however great they be in thy own eyes, or those of others, Eph. 1:6. An ox offered on the altar of Bethel would have been rejected, when two young doves were accepted on the altar of Jerusalem. They want the inworking of Christ's Spirit, James 5:16 the incense of Christ's intercession, and therefore cannot be accepted of the Father.

Mot. 2. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, the redemption purchased by Christ, till thou be united with him, Eph. 2:12. It is not thine till it be applied to thee; and it is not applied but in the way of union with him. The ark, doubtless, could have saved more than it

did; but what availed it to many that there was an ark, since they were not in it? Though there be a remedy that would cure thee, what does it avail thee, while it is not applied to thee?

Mot. 3. Miserable and dangerous beyond expression is thy state while thou art not united to Christ, Eph. 2:12. Poor soul, thou art sitting in the region and shadow of death, in the suburbs of hell. The wrath of God is hovering over thy head, though thou perceivest it not, John 3 ult. 'He that believeth not,—the wrath of God abideth on him.' Thou art secure but far from safety. The deluge of wrath is at hand, but thou hast no ark. The avenger of blood is at thy heels, and thou art not got into the city of refuge; the destroying angel is coming through, and thy door-posts are not sprinkled with blood yet; and fire and brimstone are ready to be rained down upon thee, but thou hast no Zoar to flee to.

Mot. ult. Christ offers to unite with you, Rev. 3:20 even with the worst and vilest of you all. He sends out his ambassadors to gain your consent to this union, and win your hearts. Behold the former of all things making suit to his own clay, Matth. 22:4. 'All things are ready; come unto the marriage.' Will ye slight and despise this union, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life?

2. Labour to get the Spirit, who casts the inviolable knot. If ye have not the Spirit of Christ, ye can be none of his.

3. Lastly, Believe. Christ and all his redemption are in your offer. Believe his word, embrace him in it, let your whole soul say amen to the blessed bargain. Consent to the gospel-offer, saying, Henceforth then he is mine, and I am his. Christ does not apprehend a soul by his Spirit, as a man takes a tree in his arms, but as one friend takes another, who mutually clasp one another. Do not delay this work; do not say, Te dare not do it, since without it ye cannot be united to Christ.

OF EFFECTUAL CALLING

2 TIM. 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.

THE mystical union betwixt Christ and a sinner is brought to pass in the effectual calling of a sinner, which I come now to explain, and we have in the text. The apostle had exhorted Timothy to a confident adhering to the doctrine of the gospel, over the belly of afflictions for the cause of God; and in the text shews a good reason that both he himself and Timothy had to do so, taken from what God had done for them.

1. What the Lord had done for them. (1.) Saved them; namely, from sin and wrath; i. e. had brought them into a state of salvation out of a state of sin and misery, applied Christ's salvation to them, which is so effectual that never one dies of the disease after it is applied, and therefore may be said thereupon to be saved. (2.) Called them, namely, by his Spirit, when they were at a distance from him; he called them to himself, saved and called; not that he first saved, and then called them; but he saved them by calling them; which shews this call to be an effectual call. Therefore also it is called an holy calling, not only as proceeding from an holy God, but as making the called holy too.

2. The cause of the Lord's doing this for them. (1.) Negatively; not for any merit of theirs, they had done nothing to move God to call them more than others. (2.) Positively: [1.] His eternal purpose of love and salvation to them, as the apostle explains it, Rom. 8:30. They were from eternity predestinated to salvation and the means of it, and therefore in complement of that purpose were savingly called. [2.] His grace or free favour given them in and through Jesus Christ,

which is said to have been given them before the world began, from eternity; namely, virtually in the decree, which secured the real giving them it in time, as much as if they had it in hand. And this account of the causes of this call does further evince it to be effectual calling that is meant.

The doctrine of the text is,

DOCT. 'All that partake of Christ's salvation are effectually called.'

Here I shall briefly explain to you the nature of effectual calling, and then apply it.

Effectual calling is the first entrance of a soul into the state of grace, the first step by which God's eternal purpose of love descends unto sinners, and we again ascend towards the glory to which we are chosen. And upon the matter, it is the same with conversion and regeneration. I shall shew,

I. What the effectual call in the general is.

II. Who they are that are effectually called.

III. Whence and whither are they called that are effectually called.

IV. What makes the call effectual to some, when it is not so to others.

V. What is the necessity of their being thus effectually called.

VI. I shall more particularly explain the nature of effectual calling.

I. I am to shew what the effectual call in the general is. An effectual call is opposed to an ineffectual one. An effectual call is the call that gains its real intent; that is to say, when the party called comes when called. An ineffectual call is that which gains not the real intent of it, but falls short thereof, the party called not answering and obeying

the call. To apply this to our purpose, all that hear the gospel are called; but,

1. To some of them it is ineffectual, and these are the most part of gospel-hearers, Matth. 20:16. 'For many be called, but few chosen.' They are called, invited, and obtested to come to Christ; but it is but the singing of a song to a deaf roan that is not moved with it, Prov. 1:24. The real intendment of the call is lost upon them. Though the intent of God the great caller can never be lost, who says, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure,' Isa. 46:10 yet the design of the thing is so. Though they are called, yet they come not to Christ, they sit his call, to their own destruction.

2. To others it is effectual, and these are but few, Matt. 20:16 forecited. They get the call, and they rise and come away to Christ. It is not only the intent of the call, but of him that called them, to have them home to himself; and they receive not the grace of the gospel in vain. While others at best do but play about the bait, they greedily embrace it, and are caught according to that, 'Ye shall be fishers of men.' They come away like Lot out of Sodom, while others account the call in effect but a jest, and so abide and perish in the overthrow.

II. I come now to shew who they are that are thus effectually called. The text tells us, that this effectual call is according to God's purpose and free grace in Christ; and so it follows, that the elect, and they only are thus called, Rom. 8:30. Acts 13:48. Others may be outwardly called by the ministry of the word, and have some common operations of the Spirit too, but are never effectually called. The bow is shot at a venture among the hearers of the gospel; but God, that knoweth who are his, directs the arrow, so as to make it hit right. O the riches and freedom of grace that appears in this! For,

1. It is men, and not fallen angels, that are called, though they should have been preferred, if God had respected the dignity of nature among his lost creatures. But 'the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting

chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day,' Jude, 6. There is special love in that, 'Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men,' Prov. 8:4. O may we not say, as Psal. 8:4. 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?'

2. It is some men, and not others, that are called effectually, and these naturally in as bad and sinful a condition as others, Eph. 2:12. 'At the time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.' They cannot pretend here, that they made the difference by their works; for says the text, He saved us, and called us, not according to our works. Nay, oft-times, they were worse than many others, such as fornicators, idolaters, &c. of whom Paul to the Corinthians, 1 Epist. 6:11 says, 'Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' And says that apostle of himself, 1 Tim. 1:13. 'I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy.' Oft-times grace chuses to work on the most knotty piece of timber, which there is the least hope of.

3. Lastly, It is for the most part those who have the least advantages as to their outward condition in the world. For says the apostle, 1 Cor. 1:26, 27, 28. 'Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.' The Lord takes some of the greatest wits, of the greatest power, and the best blood in the world, but not many such. But often grace passeth by the learned man, and wise, and sits down and teaches babes in comparison with them. He passes by the rich, the noble, and the

gentle, and brings the meaner sort, the kinless things [ta agene], into a match with the Son of God, and an alliance with Heaven.

III. I proceed to shew whence and whither they are called who are effectually called. That I may answer this in a few words, observe, that there was a blessed bond of society betwixt God and his rational creatures, and among themselves, till sin entered, and then all was shaken loose. As it was at the building of Babel, so it was at the entrance of sin, there was a great scattering; sinners were separated from God, and from the holy angels, and scattered up and down on the mountains of vanity. For remedy of this, God appointed Jesus Christ the Head, in whom an elect world might meet again with God, and be gathered together among themselves, Eph. 1:10. 'That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him.' 1 Pet. 2:25. 'For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.' So then they that are effectually called, are,

1. Called out of the world that lieth in wickedness, 1 John 5:19. And hence the church has its name in the prophetical and apostolical writings, Ekklesia; q. d. a company called out from among others, a gathered congregation. And so the gathering of them is made the great work of Jesus Christ, the Founder of the church, John 11:52. The elect of God, in their natural condition, are lost sheep gone astray among the devil's goats; effectual calling is the bringing them from out among them, back to Christ's fold. They are the lost groat lying hid among the dust of the nasty house of this world; effectual calling is the taking them out from among that dust, and restoring them to the use for which they were designed.

Thus Christ bespeaks his spouse (for that work is still going on, and will be so, till they be quit of the world, soul and body, 1 Thess. 5:24.) 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house*.' Psal. 45:10. 'come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the

top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.' They are called away from the sinful and miserable state of the world, from their ways manners and work; in a word, out of their society, so that though they be in the world, they are no more of it, and therefore do they fare so ill in it, John 15:19. Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.'

2. Called unto Jesus Christ, and through him to the blessed society of another world. So the call runs, Matth. 11:28. 'Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' The society they are called and come to is that of God himself, the holy angels, all the saints in heaven and earth which have gone before them, Jesus Christ being the blessed bond of the society, the centre of union wherein they meet, Heb. 12:22, 23, 24. 'Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel.' Here the call is, 'All things are ready; come unto the marriage,' Matth. 22:4.

Thus they are, like Noah, called into the ark, where they will be safe when the deluge of wrath sweeps away the world of the ungodly. Like Lot, they are called unto Zoar, where they will be safe while fire and brimstone is rained on those that stay behind. They are called to the feast on the great sacrifice, Christ crucified, while others perish for want; to the partaking of the benefits of Christ's redemption, while others have neither part nor lot in that matter, but must fall a sacrifice for their own sins to avenging justice. The particulars they are called to, will serve them to tell through eternity.

IV. I proceed to shew what makes the call effectual to some, when it is not so to others. Negatively,

1. It is neither the piety, parts, nor seriousness of those who are employed to carry the gospel-call to sinners, 1 Cor. 3:7. Indeed, if moral suasion were sufficient to bring sinners back to God, men that have the art of persuading, and can speak movingly and seriously could not fail to have vast numbers of converts. But that work is not so brought about, Luke 16 ult. Hence said Abraham to the rich man in hell, 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.' Never did these, conjunctly or severally, appear in any, as in Christ, who 'spake as never man spake.' But behold the issue, John 12:37, 38. 'But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, 'Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?'

2. Neither is it one that uses his own free-will better than another does, Rom. 9:6. 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.' For every man will be unwilling till the power from another quarter make him willing, John 6:44. If it were so, one man should make himself to differ from another in that grand point. But hear what the Apostle Paul says, 1 Cor. 4:7. 'Who maketh thee to differ from another?' Men are dead in trespasses and sins, and such cannot difference themselves.

3. Positively. We may say in this case, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.' It is the Spirit of the Lord, accompanying the call of the word, that makes it effectual, John 6:63. Hence days of the plentiful effusion of the Spirit are good days for the take of souls, and contrary wise, when the Spirit is restrained, Psal. 110:3. Therefore Isaiah resolves the question thus, 'Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' The report may reach the ears, but it is the arm of the Lord that must open the heart, as it did that of Lydia. Mahomet II. the Turkish emperor, having desired to see Scanderbeg's scymitar, said, that he saw nothing in it more than ordinary; the other returned him

answer, that the virtue of the weapon depended on the strength of his arm.

V. It may be asked, What necessity is there for their being thus called? The necessity of it is manifest to all that know their natural case.

1. They are far off, Eph. 2:13 far from God, and Christ, and all good, Eph. 2:12. Hence the call is, 'Draw nigh to God.' We are at a distance from him naturally; not a distance of place, for God is every where, Acts 17:27 but of opposition, as far from him as war from peace, black from white, and hell from heaven. Our nature is contrary to his, and our will to his will, Rom. 8:7. And there is no bringing us to him but by a very powerful and effectual call, whereby the sinner is irresistibly drawn, John 6:44. 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him.'

2. They are hard and fast asleep, and they need this call, Eph. 5:14. 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' The ship they are in is every moment in hazard of being swallowed up of the waves, for the storm of wrath is gone out against it; but, like Jonah, they are down in the sides of the ship, know nothing of the matter to purpose, but are fast asleep. All their spiritual senses are locked up, they can neither see nor hear. Ministers cry, conscience cries, Awake thou sleeper, but to no purpose; if they be disturbed, they lay down their heads again, and take yet a little sleep, a little slumber, though they should never awaken till they be in the bottom of the deep. And thus on they sleep, till the Spirit of the Lord call them effectually.

3. If they were awakened, they know not where to go to, Acts 2:37. When they find the house on fire about their heads, they know not how to make their escape. The law-light that awakens them, cannot let them see Christ. He is preached and pointed out in the word, but they cannot take up the city of refuge, nor the way that leads to it, 1 Cor. 2:14 until the Spirit of the Lord call them by his power, and they

hear the voice behind them, saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' Christ is a veiled Saviour to the natural man, till his eyes be opened.

4. If they did know where to go to, they are not willing to go thither, John 5:40. They are naturally unwilling to leave their lusts; all the milk and honey of the heavenly Canaan held forth in the gospel, cannot wean their hearts from the flesh-pots of Egypt. To leave a lust is like the cutting off of a right hand. And in this respect they need a powerful call, such a word from the Lord himself as makes the mountains to shake, the rocks to rend, and the graves to give up their dead, and the whale to vomit up Jonah. And particularly they are naturally unwilling to come to Christ, and will not be made willing in a day of power, Psal. 110:3. When they are convinced of their disease, yet they cannot think to employ that Physician, or undergo his method of cure. Hence so many awakened sinners employ physicians of no value; they will go to the law that wounded them, they will watch, pray, mourn, and macerate their own bodies, rather than believe. For there is a peculiar enmity in man's nature against the gospel-way of salvation. So there is a necessity of an effectual call.

5. If they were willing to go to Christ, yet being awakened, they dare not venture, guilt so stares them in the face, Jer. 2:25. 'Thou saidst, There is no hope.' While the man is asleep, it is nothing to him to believe, to come to Christ; like people that walk in their sleep, they can go any where fearlessly. But when he is awakened, it is not so easy. He will then be like Adam, hiding himself on hearing the voice of the Lord, and will not come till he be called by the Lord himself. Hence so many words of grace heaped on one another in gospel-invitations, Isa. 55:7, 8, 9. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.' For the Lord knows, that however the sinner unawakened thinks coming to Christ a light thing, yet when once

awakened, doubts and fears will be going as thick as dust in the sweeping of a dry floor.

6. Lastly, If they durst come, yet they cannot come, unless they be drawn, John 6:44 forecited. Sinners naturally are not only asleep, but dead in sins. And no less power is requisite to bring them than to raise the dead, and therefore this call is a voice that raiseth the dead, John 5:25. The product of this call is a new creation, Eph. 2:10, compare Rom. 4:17.

VI. Lastly, I shall more particularly explain the nature of effectual calling. Ye see it is the work of the Lord's Spirit; and there is a twofold work of the Spirit upon the elect soul in effectual calling, one on the understanding, and the other on the will.

FIRST, On the understanding. This is the leading faculty of the soul, which by sin is overspread with darkness, Eph. 5:8. Satan finishes his work here, who, when he has got the soul asleep, shuts door and window, and draws the curtains, that the light may not enter, that so the soul may sleep the sleep of death; does as the Philistines did with Samson, puts out the sinner's eyes, when his strength is gone. And God begins his work here, as in the first creation, so in the second creation, 'The earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light' Gen. 1:2, 3. Now, the work of the Spirit herein is twofold.

FIRST, An illumination of the soul from mount Sinai. And that is conviction of sin and misery, John 16:8 or the law-work. The Spirit of the Lord speaks to the soul as it were out of the midst of the fire; but there is blackness, darkness, and tempest, mixed with this light. And here consider the matter, the effects, the means, and the depth, of this conviction.

First, The matter of this conviction which is twofold.

1. Sin, John 16:8. 'He will reprove the world of sin.' The Spirit of the Lord convinces the man that he is a sinner, and sets his particular sins in order before him, Psal. 50:21. Then sins that are out of mind, as dead and buried, have a fearful resurrection, Rom. 7:9. The spirit of bondage leads his prisoner in chains, through the several parts and steps of this life, to his very birth; and shews him convincingly his sins in them: lets him see such ill in sin as he never saw before, how heinously God takes it, and that with the several aggravations thereof.

2. Misery, John 16:8. The Spirit of the Lord convinces him, that he is lost and undone, Luke 15:17. Being convicted and found guilty, sentence passes on him within his own breast, whereby he sees himself doomed to eternal death. He is convinced, as if an angel from heaven should tell him, that he is under God's wrath and curse, and that therefore, if he die in that case, he will perish for ever. He sees God to be his enemy; his word to speak no good of him, and all God's creatures his enemies in some sort ready armed against him.

Secondly, The effects of it are these three especially.

1. Remorse, Acts 2:37. 'They were pricked in their hearts.' The man's conscience now galls him, and he is stung to the heart by the serpent which he hugged so kindly. Waves of killing grief and sorrow go over his soul, for his bypast fully and madness. He sees he has been murdering his own soul, and he groans out an elegy over his dead self.

2. Terror, Acts 16:27 as in the case of the Phillippian jailor. He sees now how he has to do with a holy just God, and how fearful a thing it is to fall into his hands. Horror takes hold on him, because of the judgments which he valued no more than the shadow of the mountains before. Then the stoutest sinner will quake at the shaking of a leaf, within his bosom, at the thought of death and eternity. A word from the Lord will pierce like a sword.

3. Anxiety, Acts 2:37. The soul is then stretched on the rack, and would fain know if there be any hope. Sometimes it hopes, sometimes fears, but always would fain be delivered. This anxiety will fill head, and heart, and hand, and swallow up all other cares; for then the soul sees the truth of that saying, 'What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' Mat 16:26.

Thirdly, The means by which this conviction is wrought. The Spirit of the Lord makes use of the word for that effect, and particularly of the law. The elect soul is brought prisoner to Mount Sinai, and there the Spirit of the Lord reads a dreadful lecture of the fiery law unto it. And here,

1. By the commands, the Spirit convinces of sin, Rom. 7:7. The law is held out in its spirituality, and it proves to be the candle of the Lord, searching the innermost parts of the belly; a looking glass, wherein one gets such a sight of himself as he never had before.

2. By the threatenings and curse of the law, the Spirit convinces of misery. There they read their doom, Gal. 3:10. 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' Then every command appears fenced with a curse, and so each of them writes death to the sinner. And thus the law exacting perfect conformity to it, and binding wrath and sin together, binds over the sinner to death.

Fourthly, The depth of this conviction. This conviction, or law-work, is not alike in all; but it is deep enough, and but enough, when,

1. The sinner is not only convinced of the sins of his life, lips, and heart, but also of the sin of his nature, Rom. 7:14. He must be convinced of the corrupt disposition of his soul, whereby he is fitted for all evil, and unfit for any good; for if he see not where his sore lies, how can he apply the remedy to it? Therefore the Lord bids the people of Judah to 'break up their fallow ground, and sow not among

thorns,' Jer. 4:3 to carry down the plow to the root of their corruptions, which is the sin of our nature. It was the ruin of the stony ground, that there was no depth of the earth. And it is the ruin of many who are convinced, that they never get a true sight of their own sinful nature; and thus their case turns to be like that of a boil, not sufficiently lanced, it is scurfed over a while, but never healed.

2. When the sinner is convinced of his absolute need of Christ, and of all his salvation, John 16:8. It is for this end that the Spirit works this work on the elect. Sinners will not come to Christ as long as they can find any other way; and therefore the Spirit hunts the elect out of all their starting holes, that finding no rest for the soles of their feet, they may get into the ark.

Therefore they must be convinced that they cannot want him; that they are utterly undone, if they get not an interest in him. And they must see their need of his sanctifying Spirit, as well as his justifying blood; that they must be saved by him from sin, as well as from wrath. They must see their utter inability to take away their guilt by all their mourning, reformation, &c. and that they can as little mortify a lust as take away guilt.

Inf. 1. How hopeless is the case of many that have never yet been awakened by the Spirit of conviction! The forerunners of the effectual call are not yet come unto you.

2. What a madness is it to work against and stave off convictions, or to murder them when they have once entered! These sinners against their own souls, wrestle against their own salvation.

SECONDLY, The work of the Spirit in effectual calling, is an illumination of the soul from Mount Zion. It is the enlightening in the knowledge of Christ, Acts 26:18. It is the finding of the pearl spoken of, Matt. 13:45, 46. It is the discovery of the Physician to the soul anxious for spiritual life and health. And this is a refreshing illumination, like the appearance of the rising sun after a long black

and dark night, Hos. 6:3. And here let us consider the matter, the effect, the means, and the measure, of this illumination.

First, The matter of this illumination is twofold.

1. Christ's ability to save. The man is made to see that Christ is able to save him, and that however desperate his condition be, he can cure him, Heb. 7:25. 'He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God through him.' The eyes that were held before that they could not perceive him, discover now his glorious suitableness to their case. They see him in the glory of his person and natures, and his offices; a fulness in him, of merit for their justification, and of Spirit for their sanctification.

2. His willingness to save. The man is made to see that Christ is willing to save him, John 6:37. 'Him that cometh to me, (says the Lord Jesus), I will in nowise cast out.' He sees that there is hope in Israel concerning his salvation in particular; that however his sins be many and great, yet he is not excluded from the benefit of the indemnity proclaimed and offered in the gospel. He discovers the Saviour stretching out his arms to embrace him, and calling him to partake of the benefits of his purchase.

Secondly, The effect of this illumination is hope. As the wise merchant hoping to be the owner of the pearl, sets himself to it, Matth. 13:46. The soul then begins to lift up its head, and says, 'Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him?' Joel. 2:14.; and with Jonah in the whale's belly, 'Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple,' Jonah 2:4. And this is a blessed anchor of the soul that is yet in the depths, and has not got ashore, and keeps it from despondency.

Thirdly, The means by which it is wrought. That is the glorious gospel in the hand of the Spirit, Acts 26:17, 18. For Christ is the subject of it, Eph. 3:8. The law discovers the disease, and the gospel the physician. The one is effected by the thunder of a broken law, and

the other by the still small voice of the gospel. And herewith begins the healing of the wounded soul.

Fourthly, The measure of it. The clearer this light be, it is so much the better. The more fully one be persuaded of Christ's ability and willingness to save, the more quick and thorough will his deliverance from all his fears be. But it is more or less, and not of one degree, in all. But so much of it is necessary as may make the soul venture itself on Christ, Mark 9:24. And even this is very acceptable in the sight of the Lord, as the fruit of his own Spirit, Cant. 6:10.

SECONDLY, The second work of the Spirit in effectual calling is on the will of the sinner. This faculty of the soul needs also a saving work of the Spirit thereon, being fearfully depraved in the state of nature, Rom. 8:7. Effectual calling is the Lord's opening of the heart, as Lydia's; as the call of the gospel is, to open to him, Rev. 3:20. There is a twofold door opened in effectual calling. (1.) The outer door of the understanding. That is opened by the twofold illumination spoken of before. And that door may at least be half-opened, as blown up by a law-storm of conviction, and yet the soul be not effectually called. (2.) The inner door of the will; and when that is opened, the work is done, Christ and the sinner meet. It is the great work. Now, the Spirit's work on the will is,

The renewing of it, Ezek. 36:26. The Spirit of the Lord takes away the old and obstinate will of the sinner, which was an iron sinew in his neck, that would never bow to him; and gives him a new will, renewing him in the Spirit of his mind. Sin gave all the faculties of the soul a wrong set, particularly the will, which was originally bent in conformity to the will of God; but in the state of nature is bent the quite contrary way, Rom. 8:7. The Spirit of the Lord in effectual calling brings it back in some measure to its primitive constitution.

This renovation does not change the soul in its substance but in the qualities thereof. It is the endowing of the will with new qualities, removing and breaking the power of the old ones, Eph. 4:23, 24

planting in it new dispensations and inclinations. These are chiefly two:

1. Flexibleness or pliability to good, Ezek. 36:20. 'I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.' The stony heart is inflexible; it will break but not bow. But grace makes it a heart of flesh, that will bow according to the will of God. It powerfully melts it down, like wax before the fire; and makes it capable of impressions of holiness, Acts 9:6. 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' content to be made holy, to be made clean, to come into the Physician's hand; willing to part with sin. The natural contumacy, wilfulness, and refractoriness, is carried off; the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke is tamed, and is taught to stand and receive it.

2. A proneness and bent of the will to good, Jer. 31:18. The natural aversion is conquered, and the will that bent to the wrong side, by a powerful touch of the hand of the sanctifying Spirit, gets a set the contrary way, and is bowed or inclined to the will of God. This David prays for, for himself, Psal. 119:36. 'Incline my heart unto thy testimonies;' and the apostle, for the Thessalonians, 2 Epist. 3:5. 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God.' The Holy Ghost working like fire, softens the iron heart, and then bends it according to his will, Psal. 110:3. 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.'

If any ask, how this is done? let them take their answer from Eccl. 11:5. 'Thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all, John 3:8. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth.' The works of God in nature are often beyond our reach to account for the way of them, and no wonder his work of grace is so. The effect is felt, the change is visible; but how the Spirit, worketh it, who can distinctly trace that? This we are sure of, it is done in a way agreeable to the rational nature; there is no force or compulsion in the case;

but he that made the heart, makes it willing, and sweetly, yet powerfully conquers it, Psal. 110:3.

Thus ye have heard that the work of the Spirit is twofold on the elect soul in effectual calling. It remains that,

Lastly, I shew you the blessed effect and happy issue of this twofold work of the Spirit on the elect soul. It is, that the sinner is persuaded and enabled to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered in the gospel. And thus the call is effectual. Here we may consider,

1. The effectual closing with the call. That is the sinner's embracing Christ by faith, John 1:12. The call of the gospel comes to poor sinners, saying, as Jer. 3:22. 'Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings: and when it is effectual, the soul echoes back to the call, 'Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. The heart is won to Christ, the sinner is conquered, says Amen to the covenant, and gives its consent to Christ, to take him in the offer of the gospel. It comes out of itself, renounces its own wisdom, and takes Christ for a Prophet, a Priest, and a King, for all, and instead of all. This is the great design of the call; and whatever length one come, he never answers the call, till he come this length. Though people may come the length of mourning for sin, and reformation of life in duties, if they do not embrace Christ in the gospel-offer, they stick in the place of breaking forth.

2. The warrant the sinner has to embrace Christ. That is the gospel-offer, Prov. 8:4. 'Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men.' It would be presumption indeed for guilty creatures to embrace Christ, if he were not offered unto them. That is a match which is so high above us, that we could have no hopes of it, unless it were offered to us. But we are bidden to this marriage, Matth. 22:4. We are commanded to believe on him, John 3:23 and that on our highest peril, Mark 16:16. 'He that believeth not, shall be damned.' And do what we will, we cannot please God, if we do not that, Heb. 11:6, 'For without faith it is impossible to please him:' for that is what

the Lord mainly requires of us, John 6:29. 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.'

3. How the elect soul is effectually determined to it. The Spirit of the Lord persuades him to it, John 6:45. Every man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' The soul has a bosom-counsellor, that leaves it not till it be won over to give consent to the happy match. The sinner may stand long in suspense, doubting whether to embrace the call or not, and Satan, with the corrupt heart, will muster up all the objections they can against it. But the Spirit of the Lord clears all their objections to the soul, so far as they cannot get them sustained, and presses and urges the sinner unanswerably to comply.

And this the Spirit does by the twofold illumination spoken of before. Upon the one hand, the sinner is pressed with his lost and undone state. He sees that he is undone for ever, if he does not comply. On the other, he is pressed with the sight of Christ's ability and willingness to save, and the prospect of perfect happiness upon his compliance. So that he sees all the reason in the world for answering the call.

This shews that the Spirit acts in the conversion of a soul in a way suitable to the rational nature. What stronger arguments are possible than what are here made use of? and how can they fail to determine when the Spirit of the Lord, by his gracious work, sets them home on the soul? Can there be any thing more powerful to determine the slayer to run, than to see the avenger of blood hard behind him, and the city of refuge at hand before him? And so it is in this case.

Lastly, How the sinner is helped to comply with the call. The Spirit of the Lord enables him, Eph. 1:19, 20. This is absolutely necessary, John 6:44. 'No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me draw him.' In vain will we call the lame man to run for his life, for, alas! he cannot do it; or the dead to arise, for they cannot move. But the Lord with the call sends forth a power enabling them

to answer it, as in the case of Lazarus, Phil. 2:13. 'For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' The soul gets life from the Spirit of life, feet to run to Christ, and hands to receive him, even the faith that is of the operation of God. And so the work is completed.

This is done by the renewing of the will in a special manner. The soul being made pliable, actually complies; and having got the new disposition, acts accordingly, embracing and uniting with Jesus Christ.

I proceed now to the application of this subject.

USE I. Of information. This lets us see,

1. The happiness of those that are effectually called; they are partakers of Christ's salvation. He and his redemption are theirs. Their particular privileges will afterwards occur. In the general,

(1.) Whatever they meet with in the world, it shall turn to their good, Rom. 8:28. Their crosses shall not be curses, but their curses be turned into blessings. The teeth-winds they meet with shall blow them towards their harbour, and every stone cast at them shall be turned into a precious stone. They shall be gainers by all, and losers by nothing at length. For that eternal purpose by which they are called, has ordered all things for their good.

(2.) They shall surely be safe for ever: 'For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance,' Rom. 9:29.

They are brought out from among the perishing multitude, and they shall never fall back again. Of the society they are called into, none can be lost. God will perfect the work which he has begun; and they that are brought upon this first step of the ladder, shall go from one step to another, till they come into the hill of God.

2. The misery of those who are not effectually called. They are not partakers of Christ's redemption. We all have the external call of the gospel; but, alas! how few of the called do come in upon the call? O, Sirs, see how ye entertain the gospel-call, your all depends on it for salvation or damnation. While ye do not comply with it, ye are in a lost state, a state of sin and wrath; yea, if ye do not comply with it, it will be worse for you than if ye had never heard the gospel-call, Prov. 1:24. I shall here, for the conviction of sinners, lay down some evidences of the gospel-call not being effectual to them.

(1.) They that never felt a divine power coming with the word into their hearts, are not effectually called, Isa. 53:1. Psal. 110:3. Think on this, ye that have still sat unmoved under the dropping of the gospel, into whose ears the word comes; but as I may say, it never sinks into your hearts. Ye have never heard the Lord's voice, and therefore are still in your sin.

(2.) They that never had any abiding impression made by the word on their spirits. Many are like the stony ground on whom the word makes some impression, while they hear or read it, but presently it goes away, Matth. 13:6. They are like the sieve in the water, full, but immediately lose all again. Be sure, if ever the Spirit of God deal effectually with you, he will make an impression on you that will abide. Ye will carry it home with you, and it will remain, till it make you change your way and course, and make you new creatures.

(3.) They that are still with the world lying in wickedness; the old men and women they were before, no change, no reformation with them, by all the calls of the gospel, sounding in their ears, 1 John 5:19. If ever ye comply with the call, ye will come out, and leave that way and that society. Such are all profane persons, grossly ignorant of the truths of God, prayerless persons, and generally all that are not truly godly. O how easily may most be known to be of the world! Are there not many whose speech bewrays them? they speak the language of the world, they know not that of Canaan. They keep the way of the world; they are conformed to it, in sinful scandalous

practices. They drive worldly designs as the main design they have in hand. The constant language of their practice is, 'Who will shew us any good,' any worldly or temporal good? They go with ease the way of the multitude.

(4.) They that have never been under convictions of their sinful and lost state. This is the first work of the Spirit in effectual calling. What think ye of yourselves then, who have lived at ease all your days, whose rest has never been disturbed with the thoughts of what shall become of your immortal souls at death? Luke 11:21. Have ye never seen yourselves lost and undone under the wrath of God? If so, it is an evidence, that it lies upon you still. If ye have never seen yourselves children of the devil, it is a sure token that ye are not yet the children of God.

(5.) Those whose convictions have never gone deep enough, Matth. 13:6. Many have got the sluggard's awakening, who have been disturbed in their spiritual sleep, but never thoroughly awakened, and therefore they have just fallen asleep again. They have been frightened under the guilt of gross sins, but never saw the evil of vain thoughts, idle words, &c. like children that are very easy playing with the dust, as long as it gets not into their eyes. If they have got a frightful sight of their actual sins, yet they never had the sin of their nature spread out before them. They have not been convinced of their need of Christ's Spirit for their sanctification, as well as of his blood for their justification.

(6.) Those who have stifled their convictions, warred against an awakened conscience, and come off victorious. Many take ways and means to quench the Spirit, which prevail to their own ruin; a plain evidence that they are strangers to the efficacious irresistible operations of the Spirit in effectual calling. Some get their convictions laid by delays and off-puts, as Felix did, Acts 24:25. Some for that end fill their heads and hands with business, like Cain building cities. Some with carnal mirth divert them, or, by rushing on to more sin over the belly of their consciences, do choke them, till

they become as seared with a hot iron. O horrid cruelty against the soul! to refuse to be healed!

(7.) Those who have never had any special illumination in the knowledge of Christ. It is certain, that hypocrites may be enlightened both in the knowledge of the law and of the gospel, Heb. 6:4; but there is a saving illumination in effectual calling that is peculiar to them called, John 4:10. Psal. 9:10. In that work there is such a discovery made of Christ in his ability and willingness to save, as shews him to be so suitable to the sinner's case, so transcendently excellent, as that the soul is determined to embrace him for all, Matth. 13:45, 46. It sinks the value of all created things, and makes sinful lusts to appear as husks for swine, in comparison of the bread of life.

(8.) Those who, whatever light they have got, yet there has been no heat with it, to melt down the heart and will into a pliability to the will of God, and the call of the gospel, Job 24:13. Many come a great length in light, by the common operations of the Spirit, from whom the stony heart is never taken away, nor the power of it broken. Such was the case of Balaam, in whom the heart enmity against God and holiness is still rampant, as appears from the history of him. Such also was the case of those mentioned, Heb. 6:4. &c. The outer door is broken up by the force of a law-storm, and some common touches of the Spirit on their minds; but the inner door remains still shut. The outworks are taken, but the fort of the heart remains impregnable. Some one lust or other still has the throne in the heart.

(9.) Lastly, Those whose exercises have never issued in a kindly closing with Christ in the gospel-offer. O! it is lamentable to think how many a good work that seems once fairly begun is miserably marred. Some are still kept wavering and undetermined, halting betwixt God and Baal, light pressing them forward, love to their lusts drawing them back, so that their time is like to go ere they come to a resolution what to do. Some, instead of closing with Christ, close with duties; but never come out of themselves to Christ, but like the

spider, entangled in her own web, perish. But true believers 'rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,' Phil. 3:3. Some close with Christ for justification, but never mind or see a need to close with him for sanctification.

USE II. Of exhortation. Come away from the world lying in wickedness, unto Jesus Christ, and so comply with the gospel-call. Come away, sinners, unto him. For motives,

1. Consider what a society ye are called to come out of. See their character, Eph. 2:12. Those that are 'without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.' We are all natives of that society indeed; but it is a Godless, Christless society, which we have need to leave, and that timeously.

(1.) It is a sinful society, a corrupt, unclean one, where there is nothing pure, Tit. 1:15. Better lie in a kennel with dogs, or in a hogsty with swine, than with the world in wickedness. Their souls are like Job's body, boils and sores all over, that they have not a free finger to scrape themselves withal. The society of the unconverted are defiled in all their faculties, and so they can do nothing that is good and acceptable in God's sight. Their thoughts are polluted with vanity or vileness, their words are abominable, for their throat is like an open sepulchre; their actions, their very civil actions, are sinful, Prov. 21:4.; and their religious ones are so too, Prov. 15:8.

(2.) It is a most miserable society, Rev. 3:17. O the wretched state of the unconverted world! what tongue can tell their misery, who are without Christ, and without God in the world. They are the butt of God's indignation, and set for a mark to the arrows of his wrath, Psal. 7:12, 13. They are those that are under God's curse; their state is a prison, out of which those that die in it are carried to the prison of hell: and there is no more difference betwixt them and the damned, than betwixt a dry faggot lying before the fire ready to be cast in, and

the faggot that is in it already. A black cloud of wrath hangs over their heads at all times, ready to break upon them, John 3:36.

How can it be otherwise, since it is a society which Satan is the head of, 2 Cor. 4:4 ruled and governed by him, and with whom those that die in it must lodge for ever?

Now, sinners, have ye not been long enough there already? May I not say, as Deut. 1:6. 'Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount.' O come away from Lebanon! Cant. 4:8. Leave the world of the ungodly, that are to be swept away with the flood of wrath, and come into the ark. Turn your back on that Sodom, which is to be overthrown in its own filthiness; haste and flee for your life; there is a Zoar to flee into, where ye may be safe.

2. Consider what a society ye are called to. This calling is a high calling, Phil. 3:14. It is a holy and happy society. All the saints, the excellent ones of the earth, are of it, the glorified saints, the holy angels, and God in Christ is the head of it, Heb. 12:22, 23, 24. O refuse not that high calling!

If ye will come away, ye shall enjoy the privileges of this society as members thereof, Eph. 2:19. Ye shall be inheritors of glory, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ: not only saved from wrath, but made happy here in the favour of God, and completely blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity.

3. Lastly, Consider who calleth you. It is the voice of a man that ye hear, but the word of the call is the Lord's own word: and therefore I say, 'See that ye refuse not him that speaketh,' Heb. 12:25. Our Lord Jesus has got the grant of the kingdom from the Father; and he minds to raise it up on the ruins of Satan's kingdom. And therefore he comes to the world lying in wickedness, to call out from among them whom he may make partakers of his glory. And therefore I say unto you, 'Arise, for the Master calleth you.' And since it is so, it is evident,

(1.) Ye may come; there is an open door for you, none of you all are excluded, Isa. 55:1. The fallen angels have not that privilege, and therefore they grudge ye should have it; and they will do what they can to keep you from the benefit of it.

(2.) Ye shall not be rejected, nor get the door cast in your teeth, John 6:37. Your being called ensures your welcome. Let not unbelief suggest such jealousies, as that it is needless to come now, for we will not be accepted; for the market of free grace is not yet over, and as long as the call is given you, ye may be sure of welcome. Indeed the day will come, that Christ will cease to call you; and then it will be needless to think of coming: but O come while the door is open! 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence you are,' Luke 13:24, 25.

(3.) Lastly, If ye do not come, it is upon your peril, the peril of the Mediator's vengeance. Does he call you, and will ye not come? Nay, you must come under the pain of the King's highest displeasure, Mat. 22:7.

As for you that are called, see that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, being holy in all manner of life and conversation.

OF THE BENEFITS OF EFFECTUAL CALLING

ROM. 8:30.—Whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

IN this and the preceding verse is the golden chain of salvation, consisting of five links. The first two lie out of the sinner's view, till they be brought to light by means of the third. The first is God's foreknowledge, or eternal free-love and favour to some of mankind, laid on them from everlasting. The second is the predestination of these, electing them to everlasting life, and the means leading thereto. The third is the calling of the predestinated, calling them effectually, which is done in time, of which we have spoke before: There are other two that hang upon this. The fourth is the justification of the called which may imply the whole of the relative change made upon them, both their justification and adoption; for it is evident from verse 29 that the apostle has respect to adoption in this chain. The fifth is the glorifying of the justified, which may import the whole of the real change made on the elect, namely, the sanctifying of them here, and glorifying of them hereafter. For what is grace but glory in the bud, and glory but grace brought to perfection? and therefore believers, 'with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord,' 2 Cor. 3:18. Thus effectual calling, as it rises from eternal love, so it makes the soul happy here and hereafter.

The text affords this doctrine, viz.

DOCT. 'They that are effectually called do thereby partake of great and glorious benefits and privileges, both in this life and the life to come.'

Here I shall briefly shew,

I. What are those benefits which they who are effectually called partake of in this life.

II. The benefits they partake of in the life to come.

III. Apply.

I. I shall shew what are those benefits which they that are effectually called partake of in this life.

First, There are three leading benefits which they partake of here.

1. They are all justified. So says the text. As soon as ever the soul answers the call of the gospel, and comes to Christ, the man is brought out of a state of condemnation, and gets his absolution, Rom. 8:1. He lives not a moment longer under the black cloud of the curse, but is translated into another climate, where he lives under the sunshine of the blessing. His sins are all pardoned, and he is accepted as a righteous man. He is judged, and he gets the white stone, Rev. 2:17. The law and justice have no more to demand of him; the cords of guilt are loosed and thrown away, and he is clothed with a perfect righteousness.

2. They are all adopted children of God, Eph. 1:5. They get not only the white stone, but the new name, the name of sons and daughters to God. They are brought out of the devil's family, and made members of the household of faith: not servants only, but sons. For the moment they answer the call, new blood runs in their veins; they are of the blood-royal of heaven; Christ's Father is their Father, he is their elder brother; and the Spirit of his Son dwells in them, teaching them to cry, Abba, Father. They are of the same household with the excellent of the earth: All ye are brethren; nay, with the saints and angels in heaven; for though the one dwell above, and the other below, they are all but one family, Eph. 3:15.

3. They are all sanctified, 1 Cor. 1:30. 1 Thess. 4:7. It is a holy calling, 2 Tim. 1:9. The author of it is holy, the means are holy, and the end and effect of it must needs be holy. As soon as the sinner answers the call, the Spirit of sanctification goes on with the begun work in him, breaks the reigning power of sin, gives it a deadly blow, so that it shall never recover, but languish on, till it quite die out. He adorns him with all saving graces, conforming the sinner to the image of Christ, John 1:16; so that he begins to lead a new life, living to the

Lord and his service. The call brings him, like Lazarus, out of the congregation of the dead, and then the remainder of his life is spent in putting off the grave-cloths of sin, and acting from a principle of spiritual life.

Secondly, There are other benefits which accompany or flow from these. For these come not alone, but each of them is the opening of a treasure to the called, the striking up of a fountain, that runs out in many streams, Eph. 1:3. Some of these are mentioned in that question, 'What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?' Ans. —'Assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.' But who can reckon up all these benefits? For 'all things are theirs; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are theirs,' 1 Cor. 3:21, 22. I shall only at present single out the following.

1. Reconciliation with God, Rom. 5:1. 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.' When the sinner is effectually called, the real enmity is taken away, and the legal enmity is removed by justification. God and the sinner become friends, and are firmly so in a covenant of peace, having common friends and enemies. Sin being removed and pardoned, the peace follows of course. The war is ended; for the treaty of peace proposed by the ambassadors of peace is complied with. But of this I spoke when treating of Christ's priestly office.

2. Access to God, as children to a Father, Eph. 3:12 as one friend to another. The war being ended, and peace concluded, the communication betwixt heaven and earth is opened. They may export thither all their wants, petitions, and requests, being sure that they will be taken off their hands; and import supplies of all kinds necessary, to make them happy, light, life, strength, &c.

3. Freedom from the slavery of sin and Satan, John 8:32. They that are sanctified by the Spirit, are loosed from the Egyptian bondage, and made the Lord's free-men. Though Satan and sin molest them, and put them hard to it, they shall never get them back again into their former house of bondage. But they shall, like a dog snarling at the horses heels, be bruised under their feet at length; and the soul shall be more than conqueror.

4. Lastly, A right to eternal life, Rom. 8:17. Acts 20:32. They may claim it in their head Christ, and their title is good and sure in him; for it is a heavenly calling, whereby they are called to the eternal inheritance. And therefore says the apostle, 2 Cor. 5:1. 'We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'

II. I shall shew what benefits they that are effectually called partake of in the life to come. The advantages of effectual calling are great in this life, but they do not stop there, when a man must leave all temporal benefits, which he enjoys any manner of way here in this world, he will enter to the full enjoyment of the benefits coming by his answering the gospel-call. These are comprehended in one word, glorification, which will fall in afterwards to be treated of. In a word, at death the converted soul is received into heaven; at the last day his body will be gloriously raised, and both soul and body made perfectly happy for ever, 2 Thess. 2:14.

I come now to make some practical improvement of this subject.

USE I. Of information. This doctrine lets us see,

1. That the gospel is the best news that ever was heard in the world, and the most excellent offer that ever was made to poor sinners, Eph. 3:8. There are many to court the soul; Satan makes his offers, the world its offers, and sin has its offers too. But all that they offer will not tell far, it perishes in the using, at most it cannot reach beyond

this life. But Christ's offer in the gospel is of the best of things here, and the best of all hereafter, that we may enter to the enjoyment of, when nothing remains but the bitter dregs of the offers of sin, Satan, and the world.

2. God deals very liberally and kindly with his people that answer his call. He does not put an empty spoon into their mouths, he sets them not down to bare commons; they get much in hand, and yet far more in hope, Psal. 84:11. Their present possessions are far more valuable than crowns and sceptres in the world; but what they have a title to, is what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive. And then all is firm and sure; they can never be shaken out of their privileges, Rom. 11:29. Heb. 12:28.

3. Whatever men lose by complying with and following the gospel-call, they are gainers, Phil. 3:8. He was a wise merchant that sold all to buy the pearl of great price. They are wise indeed that are wise for their souls; and they are so that come to Christ on his call; while all the neglectors of the great salvation, gain what they will otherwise, do lose a talent while they gain a mite, losing their own souls, which loss can never be made up.

USE II. Of exhortation.

First, To unconverted sinners. O comply with the gospel-call at length, and come away to Christ. I offer a few motives to press the exhortation.

Mot. 1. While ye do not come away upon the call, ye have no part or lot in these benefits. If ye presume to apply them to yourselves, God's word knocks off your fingers from them, for they are the peculiar privilege of those that are effectually called. And,

1. Ye are not justified, the sentence of condemnation is standing in force against you, Gal. 3:10. John 3 ult. And as sure as God's word cannot fail, it will be executed, if ye come not in in time. Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse; all that thou dost is sin. But not one

of all thy sins is pardoned; they are all wreathed about thy neck, and thou hast them all to reckon for. And thou hast not a cautioner to go between justice and thee; the burden must lie on thy own back.

2. Ye are none of God's children, but of the devil's, John 8:44. Ye are still of the family ye were born of. A sad family, against which God will have war for ever. Ye can have no access to God, nor communion with him, nor may any of the privileges of the children of God be claimed by you. Your inheritance is suitable to the family ye are of, namely, that ye are children of wrath, and heirs of hell.

3. Ye are not sanctified. There is no sanctification without the Spirit of Christ dwelling in you; ye have not Christ's Spirit, for ye are none of his. A form of godliness ye may have, but the power of it ye are strangers to. Ye are Satan's drudges and sin's slaves, though all are not employed in alike coarse work by the master of that family, Eph. 2:2, 3.

Mot. 2. If ye will come to Christ on his call, ye shall partake of all these benefits. If your sins were never so great and many, they shall be pardoned, Isa. 55:7. Ye shall be the children of God through Jesus Christ, John 1:12. Ye shall be made holy, 1 Cor. 6:11. Come in under the covert of his blood, and then neither law nor justice shall reach you. Match with the Son of God, and ye shall be of his Father's family. Answer his call, and he will break the yoke from off your necks, and make you free.

O, Sirs, do not ye need this benefits? How will ye live without them? are ye able to bear the weight of unpardoned guilt? How will ye die without them? What will it be to die in an unpardoned state, strangers to the family of heaven, and still in your sins? May not these glorious privileges prevail with you? Do ye think nothing of the white stone and new name, which ye may get by coming to Christ? Seemeth it a light thing to you to be adopted into the family of the King of heaven, and to have his image drawn on you? Think with yourselves how it will aggravate your condemnation, that Christ and

all his salvation was in your offer, and ye would have none of him, Heb. 2:3.

Secondly, To converted sinners that have answered the call.

1. Labour to know your great privileges for time and eternity, 2 Pet. 1:10. O! it is a sad matter that the people of God should have so little knowledge of their state. This would be a notable means to promote sanctification, and tenderness in heart and life.

2. Be thankful for these privileges. Bless God for Christ and the gospel. O bless him for his holy and powerful Spirit. Admire and adore his rich grace, bestowed on worthless worms through Christ, 1 John 3:1.

3. Lastly, Walk worthy of the vocation, and suitable to the privileges of it, that is, humbly, holily, heavenly, contentedly patiently, and cheerfully, in hopes of the glory that is to be revealed.

OF JUSTIFICATION

ROMANS 3:24.—Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

THE first of those benefits which the called do partake of is justification, which is the great relative change made upon them, bringing them out of the state of condemnation, wherein they are born, and live till they come to Christ. In the text we have,

1. The persons justified, sinners, viz. believing in Christ. It is the justification of a sinner that the apostle speaks of, as is implied in the connection, ver. 23, 24. 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his grace; but believing, ver. 26. —the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.'

2. The party justifying, God the judge of all, his grace. It is God's act to justify a sinner.

3. The manner and moving cause, freely by his grace. It is done freely, without any thing of ours done by us to procure or merit it; and it flows from God's grace or free favour to undeserving and ill deserving creatures.

4. The material and meritorious cause, the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. He has paid the price and ransom whereby the sinner is set free.

The text affords this great and important doctrinal note, viz.

DOCT. 'The justification of a sinner before God is of free grace, through the satisfaction of Christ.

In discoursing from this subject I shall shew,

I. What it is to justify a sinner, in general, in the scriptural sense.

II. What are the parts of justification.

III. The cause of our justification.

IV. Apply the subject.

1. I shall shew what it is to justify a sinner, in general, in the scripture-sense. Justification and sanctification are indeed inseparable. In vain do they pretend to be justified who are not sanctified; and in vain do they fear they are not justified, who are sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, 1 Cor. 6:11. But yet they are distinct benefits, not to be confounded, nor taken for one and the same.

Justification is not the making of a person just and righteous, by infusing grace or holiness unto him. But it is a discharging him from guilt, and declaring or pronouncing him righteous. So it is a law-term

taken from courts of judicature, wherein a person is accused, tried, and after trial absolved. Thus the scripture opposeth it to accusation and condemnation, Rom. 8:33, 34. '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, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us,' Deut. 25:1. 'They shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.' And so it is declared to be a sin to justify the wicked, Prov. 17:15 not to make them righteous, but to pronounce them righteous. Hence it follows, that,

1. Justification is not a real change of the sinner's nature, but a relative change of his state. The change of the sinner's nature, from sin to holiness, is inseparably annexed to it: but it is only the bringing him out of the state of condemnation, and setting him beyond the reach of the law, as a righteous person, which is an unspeakable benefit.

2. Justification is an act done and passed in an instant in the court of heaven, as soon as the sinner believes in Christ; and not a work carried on by degrees. For if a sinner be not perfectly justified, he is not justified at all. If a man were accused of ten capital crimes, if one of them be fixed upon him, he is condemned, and must die. And hence also, though one may be more sanctified than another, yet no believer is in the sight of God more justified than another, since the state of justification is not capable of degrees.

II. I proceed to shew what are the parts of justification.

These are two, the pardoning of sin, and the accepting of the sinner's person as righteous. This double benefit is conferred on the sinner in justification. That we may the more clearly take up this matter, we must view the process of a sinner's justification. And here,

First, God himself sits Judge in this process, Psal. 9:4. 'Thou sittest in the throne judging right.' He gave the law; and as he is the

Lawgiver, so he is the Judge of all the earth. Men may justify themselves, Luke 10:29 and others may justify them: but what does it avail, if God do not justify them? for only he has the authority and power to do it, Rom. 8:33. 'It is God that justifieth.' Many a man looking overly into his own state and case, passes a very favourable sentence on himself, and his way may be so blameless before the world, that others must judge him a righteous man too; but the judgment of God comes after, and reverses all. And he only can justify authoritatively and irreversibly. For,

1. He only is the Lawgiver, and he only has power to save or to destroy, and therefore the judgment must be left to him, Jam. 4:12. The case concerns his honour and law, and must be tried at his tribunal; and whoever takes it in hand, he will call it to his own bar.
2. To him the debt is owing, and therefore he only can give the discharge. Against him the crime is committed, and he only can pardon it. Accept us as righteous who will, if he do it not, who gave the law of righteousness, it is nothing, Mark 2:7.

Secondly, The sinner is cited to answer before God's judgment-seat, by the messengers of God, the ministers of the gospel, Mal. 3:1. Every sermon an unconverted sinner hears, is a summons put into his hand to answer for his living in a state and course of sin. He is told he has broken God's law, and he must go to God and see what he will answer, and what course he will take with his debt. But, alas! for the most part sinners are so secure, that they sit the summons, slight it, and will not appear.

But that is not all. Some keep themselves out of the messenger's way; either they will not come at all, or very seldom to the public assemblies where the summons is given, Heb. 10:25. But the leaving of the summons there will hold in law before him that sends them, and the dust of the messenger's feet will be sufficient witness to the execution, Matt. 10:14. Some never read the summons, they never once seriously consider or apply to themselves the word preached.

They hear it as if they heard it not, it never sinks into their hearts. Others tear the summons in pieces; their hearts, like Ahab in the case of Micaiah, rise against the word and the bearer of it, and they hate both, as speaking no good of them. Some affront the messengers, and sometimes lay violent hands on them, Matth. 22:6. And thus some sit the summons all their days, and never appear till death bring them under his black rod, before the tribunal in another world, where there is no access to justification or pardon. But God suffers none of his elect to do so always.

Thirdly, The Lord the Judge sends out other messengers, and they apprehend the sinner, lay hands on him to carry him, whether he will or not, before the judgment-seat, and oblige him to abide his trial. And these are two, the Spirit of bondage, and an awakened conscience, John 16:8, 9. Prov. 20:27. These will catch the man, and hunt him till they find him out, when they have got their order, Jer. 2:27. They apprehended Paul when going to Damascus, and left him not till he appeared, and submitted himself.

But it is not always so. Some that are apprehended get out of the messenger's hands, and make their escape unhappily. When they are caught, they are unruly prisoners, they struggle and wrestle, and strive against the Spirit, and their own consciences, Acts 7:51 they go no farther with them than they are dragged. They get the mastery at length over their conscience, break its bonds, and stifle its convictions, and so grieve and quench the Spirit, that they get away to their own ruin; like Cain, Saul, Felix, &c. But none of God's elect ever get away altogether.

Fourthly, Then the elect soul is infallibly sisted at length before the judgment-seat. The Spirit of bondage and the awakened conscience apprehend him afresh, and bring their prisoner in chains of guilt unto the bar trembling, and he can escape the trial no longer, before a holy God, Acts 16:29, 30. Then what fear, sorrow and anxiety, seize the prisoner's soul, while he sees a just Judge on the throne, a strict and severe law laid before him, and he has a guilty conscience

within! And he must undergo a trial for his life, not the life of the body only, but of soul and body for evermore. These things may seem idle tales to some; but if ye have not experienced the reality of them, ye shall do it, or dreadful shall the judgment after death be to you.

Fifthly, Then the indictment, or criminal libel, is read in the ears of the trembling sinner before the Judge, and that by the law, which manages the accusation so as the pannel shall stand speechless, Rom. 3:10–19. Every one of the ten commands accuse him of innumerable evils and transgressions. His omissions and commissions are laid in broadband before him; his sins of heart, lip and life, and the sin of his nature, are all charged upon him, and that with their several aggravations. And sentence is demanded against the pannel, according to justice, and agreeable to the law, Gal. 3:10. 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.'

Sixthly, Then the sinner must plead guilty or not, to the indictment. Indeed, if he were innocent, he might plead not guilty, deny the libel, and thereupon he would be justified. But, alas! this plea is not for us poor sinners. For, (1.) It is utterly false, Rom. 3:10. Eccl. 7:20. Jam. 3:2. And, (2.) Falsehood can never bear out before God's judgment-seat. There is no want of evidence to prove all. Conscience within is as a thousand witnesses, and will testify against the sinner. The Judge is omniscient, and there is no concealing of our crimes from him. Therefore this plea will not do, Rom. 3:20. The sinner then must needs plead guilty, confess the libel, and every article of it, acknowledge the debt, and every article of it, though he is utterly unable to pay, Rom. 3:19.

Seventhly, The sinner being convicted by his own confession as guilty, is put to it to plead, What he has to say why the sentence of death eternal should not pass against him, according to law and justice, and why he should not be hauled from the judgment-seat to execution. Here, what shall he plead at this awful period of time, where his state for eternity is just upon the turning point? Shall he

plead mercy for mere mercy's sake, casting himself down at the Judge's feet? Justice interposes betwixt mercy and the sinner, and pleads that the Judge of all the earth must do right, that he cannot prostitute his honour for the safety of rebels, but must magnify the law, and make it honourable. The truth of God interposes, and says, the word is already gone out of the Judge's mouth, and must be accomplished, That without shedding of blood there is no remission. Whither shall the sinner turn now? Can the saints help? No; they cannot spare any of their oil. Can angels do nothing? No; their united stock would not be sufficient to clear the debt. The sinner then must die the death, and sink under his own burden, if help come not from another quarter. So,

Eighthly, The formerly despised Mediator, the great Advocate at this court, who takes the desperate causes of sinners in hand, and expedites them, offers himself now, in this extremity, to the sinner, with his perfect righteousness, and all his salvation. The sinner embraces him with heart and good-will, enters into the covenant, by faith lays hold on him, renounces all other claims, and betakes himself to his alone merits and suretyship. Now is the sinner united to Christ, and by virtue of that union has communion with him, particularly in his righteousness, and so stands before God in the white raiment of the Mediator's righteousness. Now has the sinner a plea that will infallibly bring him off.

He pleads, he is guilty indeed; yet he must not die, for Christ has died for him. The debt was a just debt; but the Cautioner has paid it, and therefore he craves up his discharge. The law's demands were just; but they are all answered already, both as to doing and suffering. The soul is now married to Christ; and therefore, if the law or justice want any thing, they must seek it of the Husband, and not of her, seeing the soul is thereby put under covert. Therefore the convicted believing sinner gets in under the covert of the Mediator's blood, which stands open in that court; and there stands and pleads against all that law or justice can demand, that he must not die, but be graciously acquitted.

Lastly, Hereupon God the great Judge sustaining the plea passes the sentence of justification on the sinner, according to the everlasting agreement that passed betwixt the Father and the Son, Isa. 53:11. The pannel gets the white stone and new name, and so is for ever set beyond the reach of condemnation, Rom. 8:1. This is excellently described by Elihu, Job 33:22, 23, 24. 'Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness: Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom.' This great benefit consists of two parts, as I observed before.

FIRST, The pardon of sin, Acts 13:38, 39. 'Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.' The sinner having this act of grace passed in his favour, is fully indemnified as to all crimes committed by him against the honour and law of the King of heaven, so as they shall never be charged upon him any more. Here I shall shew,

1. What pardon is.
2. The properties of it.
3. Its many sweet names, that discover the nature of it.

First, I shall shew what pardon is. It is not the taking away the nature of sin, pardoned sin is still sin; God justifies the sinner, but will never justify his sin. Nor is it the removing of the intrinsic demerit of sin; it still deserves condemnation, though it shall never actually condemn the sinner, Rom. 8:1. Nor is it a simple delay of the punishment, a reprieve is no pardon.

There are four things to be considered in sin. (1.) The reigning power of it, which is broken in regeneration and sanctification, Rom. 6:14. (2.) The blot and stain, which is taken away in the gradual advances of sanctification, 1 Cor. 6:11. (3.) The indwelling power, which is

removed in glorification, Heb. 12:23. (4.) The guilt, which is taken away in pardon.

Guilt is an obligation to punishment. The guilt of an unjustified sinner is an obligation lying upon his head, to bear the wrath and eternal vengeance of God, to satisfy justice for the breaking of his law. It is a bond binding him to go to the prison of hell, and lie there till he hath paid the utmost farthing of his debt of sin, 2 Thess. 1:9. It arises from the sanction of the law, Gen. 2:17. So that the sinner, like Shimei, having broke his confinement, is a man of death.

Pardon is the taking away of this guilt, this dreadful obligation. While the criminal stands bound with the cords of guilt for execution, a pardoning God says, 'Deliver his soul from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom, Job 33:24. Pardon cuts the knot, whereby guilt ties sin and wrath together, cancels the bond obliging the sinner to pay his debt, reverses the sentence of condemnation, and puts him out of the law's reach.

Secondly, I am to shew the properties of this pardon.—These are chiefly three. It is,

1. Full: Micah 7:19. 'Thou will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.' Col. 2:13.—'Having forgiven you all trespasses.' All the man's sins are pardoned together. God gives no half-pardons; it suits not either the riches of his grace, nor the sinner's necessity. For one leak will sink the ship, and so will one unpardoned sin damn the soul. Great and small sins, sins against the gospel and the law, the most and least heinous, in the happy hour of pardon, sink down all together into the sea of the Redeemer's blood, Jer. 50:20. And every sin is fully pardoned.

As to the question, Whether all sins, past, present, and to come, are pardoned together and at once in justification? As to sins past and present, there is no difficulty, they are all at once pardoned. As to sins to come, a justified person, being in Christ, can never more incur

the guilt of eternal wrath, but only the guilt of fatherly chastisements, so that the pardon before described needs never be renewed. And the only pardon a justified person has to seek is that of the guilt of fatherly anger with the intimation of the other pardon. For if a justified person could ever again be liable actually to the eternal wrath of God for his sin, then either he must fall from his union with Christ, which is indissoluble, or he may be in Christ, and yet under condemnation, Rom. 8:1. Besides, a person once in Christ is no more under the dominion of the law, and therefore cannot be under its curse, Rom. 6:14 and 7:4*.

2. Free: So says the text, Being justified freely, Col. 2:13. It is free to us, though to Christ it was the price of blood. What have we to give for a pardon? Could we weep as many tears as the sea has drops, afflict ourselves as many years as the world has stood minutes, it would not buy a pardon, since it is not infinite, Psal. 44:8. Our best duties are but rags, and cannot cover the menstuous rags, and would but cover one unclean thing with another; the sins of our unrighteousness with the sins of our righteousness. The sinner never pays for it, nor can pay for it, Isa. 43:24, 25.

3. Unalterable and irrevocable. Temporal mercies are lent, but pardon is given; it is a grace-gift, (Rom. 11:29.), that God never repents of bestowing. When God writes a sinner's pardon, whoever quarrel it, conscience, Satan, &c. God says, What I have written, I have written. Come after what will, it must stand for ever. No following misdemeanors can take it off, Jer. 31:34. 'I will forget their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.' Isa. 54:9.—'I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee, &c. A child of God may lose the sense of his pardon, but the pardon itself is written in the Mediator's blood, and so is one of those same mercies mentioned, Isa. 55:3.

Thirdly, Farther to shew the nature of pardon of sin, it has many sweet names, discovering its nature. And,

1. It is a blotting out of sin: 'I, even I,' says Jehovah, 'am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake,' Isa. 43:25. This is an allusion to a creditor, who, when he discharges a debt, scores it out of his count-book. Sin is a debt, the worst of debts. We cannot pay it, we cannot escape the hands of our creditor. And, alas! we are ready to deny our debt, will not come to count and reckoning, as long as we can get it shifted. So the debt stands in God's book. But the sinner being apprehended, as said is, he is brought to count and reckoning. God produces the large account. The sinner's heart falls at the sight; he falls down, confesses his debt, and his inability to pay, flies to the great Cautioner, saying, 'Undertake for me,'—Psal. 119:122; and Christ says, All thy wants be upon me. Then God takes the pen, dips it in the Mediator's blood, and cross-scores all the sinner's account, Acts 3:19. Col. 2:14.

2. A not imputing of sin, Psal. 32:2, 'Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.' This is a metaphor from merchants, who, when a rich friend undertakes for one of their poor debtors, charge their accounts no more upon him; they will seek him no more for it. God took Christ's single bond for the debt of all that would put themselves in Christ's poor roll by faith. So as soon as a sinner comes to Christ by faith, and gives in his name as a broken man unable to pay his debt, accepting of Christ as Cautioner, God imputes sin no more to that man. What accounts have been taken on by the sinner, he leaves the Son to clear with his Father. This is sustained in the court of heaven: the Creditor and the Cautioner take the matter between them, and the debt is charged no more on the sinner.

3. A taking of the burden of sin from off the sinner, Psal. 32:1. Hos. 14:2. Sin is a heavy burden, a burden increasing every day, to the unpardoned sinner. It sunk down the angels from their first habitation, and is a weight that they and the damned in hell are wrestling under at this day, but unable to get it off. The unawakened sinner finds it not; but when the conscience is awakened, it burdens the sinner all over; it is a burden on his head, on his spirit, on his back. In the day of pardon, the sinner falls down under his burden,

looks to Christ the great Burden-bearer, and God comes and takes his burden off his back, and bids him stand upright. And none else can do it, Numb. 14:17, 18, 19.

4. A washing of the sinner, 1 Cor. 6:11. 'But ye are washed.' They that have unpardoned guilt on them, they have not only a heavy, but a foul, filthy burden on them.—And they must be washed and thoroughly washed, for it sticks closely to the soul, Psal. 51:2. 'Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.' Hence the Lord offers, Isa. 1:18. 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' In the day of pardon, the Lord sprinkles the sinner with the Mediator's blood, and he is made clean, yea dips him in that fountain, Zech. 13:1; and he is purged and purified from all sin, 1 John 1:7.

5. A dismissing or remission of sin, Matth. 6:12. Rom. 3:25. God does not only take it away, but sends it away. The sinner's guilt is laid over on Christ, as the scape-goat who bears it away never to return on the sinner. Sin is a strong tie, whereby the sinner is bound down to the pit, so as he cannot lift up his head to the Lord with true confidence. Pardon brings a relaxation to the sinner, cutting asunder these cords of death. It is a sending sin, away from the sinner, back to the devil from whence it came.

6. The dispelling of a thick cloud, Isa. 44:22. Sin is a cloud rising from below: a watery cloud, a black cloud, a thick cloud: which once drowned the whole world, except those in the ark. It hangs night and day over the head of the unpardoned sinner, go where he will. He cannot see the face of God through it; it veils his mercy, wraps him up in blackness of darkness, that he can have no communion with heaven. But pardon, like the shining sun, breaks through the cloud, and dissolves it; and like a mighty wind, there is a breathing from the throne of grace, that rends the cloud and scatters it, be it never so thick; so that all the sinner's guilt as a cloud vanishes away, and

appears no more. Thus the soul is restored to the light of God's countenance, and may look up with confidence and joy, Job 33:24, 26.

7. A casting of sin behind the Lord's back, Isa. 38:17. David says, 'his sin was ever before him,' Psal. 51:4 before him as the accuser stood before the accused face to face. Praying for pardon, he prays God would hide his face from it, Psal. 51:9. A pardoning God will not look on the sin of the sinner that is in Christ, Numb. 23:21. 'He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel.' The Lord sitting on a throne of grace, to which the believer carries his process from the throne of strict justice, when Satan gives in his bill or libel against the believer, takes it and casts it away behind his back, as not to look on it, nor charge him with it.

8. A casting it into the depths of the sea, Mic. 7:19.—O the fulness of that expression! He will not cast them into a brook or river, what falls in there may be got up again perhaps; but into the sea, where we reckon a thing dead that falls. But there are some shallow places in the sea; he will cast them into the depths of the sea, these devouring depths. But what if they sink not? he will cast them in with force and power, that they shall go to the ground, and sink as lead in the ocean of the blood of Christ.

9. A covering of sin, Psal. 32:1. This is an allusion to what the Lord commanded the Israelites in their camp in the wilderness, Deut. 23:14. It is the same word in the Hebrew. It is a covering of it so as to hide it, that it shall not appear. Sin is the worst of pollutions, but a pardon spreads a cover over it, that it shall not appear any more. God condemned sin in the flesh of Christ, Rom. 8:3 and therefore, as soon as the soul takes hold of Christ, the word of pardon goes out of the King's mouth, and sin, like the face of Haman, in such a case, is covered never to see the light any more.

10. Lastly, Which crowns all, a not remembering of sin, Jer. 31:34. What can be said more to shew the fulness of pardon? Many forgive,

but they will never forget the offences done them: but our God, when he pardons, not only forgives, but as it were forgets the injury done to his glory by the sinner. It is true, God's perfections cannot admit a proper forgetting; but the believer's sins are forgotten in law; there is an irreversible act of oblivion passed upon them all in the court of heaven; and God will not only not exact the punishment of them, but will treat believers as kindly as if they had never offended him. Looking on them through Christ, he beholds them without spot.

Behold the way to be secured against sin's finding you out in wrath. O unspeakable benefit! Well may we sing and say with David, Psal. 32:1, 2. 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.'

SECONDLY, The acceptation of the person as righteous in the sight of God. God justifying a sinner does not only pardon his sin, but accepts and accounts his person righteous in his sight, 2 Cor. 5:21. 'He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' Rom. 4:6 'Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.' Chap. 5:19. 'By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.' This is the import of justifying, namely, a declaring, accepting, or accounting one righteous, as one who being pursued before a court, gets his absolution, and is declared an honest man in the point wherewith he was charged. There is a twofold acceptation in point of righteousness here to be carefully distinguished.

1. An acceptation of a man's works as righteous. 2. Of his person. All righteousness is a conformity to a law. Whatsoever comes up to what the law demands, is righteous; and what doth not is unrighteous. God hath given unto man a law, viz. the moral law, which is the eternal rule of righteousness, that never changes. So all righteousness in the sight of God is a conformity unto that law. And there is no conformity to the law, but what is in all points. So that

righteousness is a perfect conformity to the ten commands in full obedience. Now, there is,

1. An acceptation of a man's works as righteous, Gal. 3:12. 'The man that doth them shall live in them.' He that doth his works in a full conformity to the law, his works shall be accepted as righteous. But where is the man that can so do? The man Christ did so, and his works were accepted as righteous. But since God's judgment is according to truth, and he cannot account things to be what really they are not; and it is evident that even a believer's works are not righteous in the eye of the law; God neither doth nor can, in the justifying of a sinner, accept and account his works as righteous. So that this acceptation has no place in our justification. And though some of a believer's works, namely, his good works, are accepted of God, Deut. 33:11. Isa. 56:7 yet that is not in point of justification, but of sanctification; not as righteous, but as sincere tokens of their love to God, as the father accepts the work of his child, though it be not quite right, 2 Cor. 8:12.

2. An acceptation of a man's person as righteous, Eph. 1:6.—'Hath made us accepted in the Beloved.' This may be done without any eye to a work done by the man himself. If a man were processed for a debt he really took on, and which he never paid in his own person, yet if he can produce the discharge of the debt given to one that paid it for him, he will be absolved and the law will declare him to be owing nothing to the pursuer. Thus his person is accepted as righteous; and thus the believer is accepted as a righteous person in justification, though his works are not.

To be accepted as righteous, then, is to be accounted conformable to the law, a person of whom the law has what it requires, and of whom it has no more to demand. Its demands are extremely high; universal, perfect, and uninterrupted obedience. But the believer, when he is justified, is accepted, as one in respect of whom the debt is paid to the uttermost farthing, Rom. 3 ult. and 10:4. Col. 2:10. This is an unspeakable benefit; for thereby,

(1.) The bar in the way of abounding mercy is taken away, so that the rivers of compassion may flow towards the believer, Rom. 5:1. &c. Job 33:24, &c. Many look confidently for the mercy of God, that will be disappointed; the unsatisfied law will draw a bar between them, and lock up saving mercy under the bars of God's justice and truth, which cannot be broken. But the believer being accepted as righteous, the law's month is stopt, justice and truth have nothing to object against mercy's flowing to them.

(2.) The person is by this means adjudged to eternal life, even agreeably to the constitution of the law, 2 Thess. 1:6, 7. Acts 26:18. Life was promised in the first covenant upon the fulfilling of the law. Now, the law having all it can demand of the believer, it is very agreeable thereto, that he be adjudged to everlasting life. Thus what sets salvation far from unbelievers, contributes to the believer's security. As if two men had been bound severally in one tack, and both desire to go away at a certain time, the conditions are fulfilled for the one, but not for the other. The tack that secures the one's liberty, will hold the other fast; till the conditions be fulfilled, he cannot go. So all men were bound in the covenant of works to yield perfect obedience; but having failed, Christ substituted himself in the room of those chosen from among them to everlasting life, and gave complete obedience to the law in their name and place; on that account they are accepted and adjudged to eternal life, and that agreeably to the law, which has got all its demands of them in their Surety. But the rest being still under the law, must perish.

(3.) The accusations of Satan and the clamours of an evil conscience are hereby to be stilled. See how the apostle triumphs over and bids a defiance to all the believer's accusers, Rom. 8:33, 34. 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right-hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.' God's sentence of justification may be opposed to the condemnation that one may be laid under from devils and men.

He that has the discharge of the debt in his pocket, needs not fear what any can say or do unto him on account of the debt.

(4.) Lastly, He needs not seek acceptance of his person with God by his works, for he has it already another way. This is the way hypocrites take for acceptance, that will not come to Christ. But, alas! they do not consider that they are labouring in vain; it is impossible to get it that way, Rom. 9:30, 31, 32. 'What shall we say then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.' It is one of the main differences betwixt the two covenants. In the first, man's works were to be accepted, and then his person; but in the second, first his person is accepted, and then his works. In the first, God dealt with man as a master with his servant, who pleases him just as he works his work; in the second, as a father with his child, who pleases his father as he is his own child, and so his work is taken off his hand, such as it is. So they that seek acceptance with God by their works, go quite contrary to the nature of the covenant of grace, and hold on the way of the covenant of works, in which one will never thrive now. But the believer is not required to seek acceptance with God in this fruitless way. So far of the parts of justification.

III. The next general head is to shew the cause of our justification, namely, the meritorious, or procuring or material cause of it. When we consider what the justification of a sinner is, well may we with wonder cry out, How can these things be! How can a guilty sinner be pardoned by a just and jealous God! an unrighteous one accepted as righteous, by an infinitely perfect judge! We see in the world, among men, such a thing brought to pass by several means.

1. By the powerfulness of the guilty party, that the judge dare not but let them go free. Some men are so unhappy for themselves and

others as to be too strong for laws, as David complains of Joab and Abishai, saying, 'These men the sons Zeruiah be too hard for me,' 2 Sam. 3 ult. and their begging a pardon is in effect the commanding of it. But what is worm-man before the omnipotency of God! where is he that is able to make head against him, that in his favour he should 'pervert judgment?' Job 34:12, &c.

2. By the weakness of the judge's understanding, that he cannot fix guilt on the guilty. Sometimes the crime is so hiddenly committed, that man cannot say, this is the guilty man. Sometimes, when the judge is convinced of the party's guilt, yet he can by no means legally fix it on him, and so there is necessity to pass him. But God is omniscient, and can never be at a loss to discover the guilty person, nor want evidence to fix it upon him, Psalm 139:7. 1 Sam. 2:3.

3. By bribes. These blind the eyes of the wise and pervert judgment. But what can we give to God, who have nothing but what is his? Job 41:11. His infinite fulness and all-sufficiency sets him beyond all possibility of affecting him thus, Job 36:19. And if we would essay to affect him with our goodness, repentance, or reformation, behold he is beyond these too, Job 35:7. 'If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?'

4. Lastly, By feud or favour prevailing over respect to justice. But with God there is no respect of persons. All are alike to him. And he neither despises any, so as not to regard what they do, which sometimes make some guilty ones get free, Job 36:5. And there is no preposterous pity with him in prejudice of justice, as there is in some men of a too soft disposition, to execute justice, Psal. 11:6, 7.

From all which it follows, that there is some just ground upon which a sinner believing is justified before God. And we must inquire what that is,

FIRST, Negatively. It is not upon any worth or merit in the sinner himself. The text rejects that, Being justified freely by his grace. We

neither are nor can be justified by our inherent righteousness, or good works. For,

1. Scripture expressly teaches, that we are not nor can be justified by our own works, but by faith, which leads us to the righteousness of another, Rom. 3:20, 28. (compare Psal. 143:2.) Gal. 2:16. All works are excluded without distinction or limitation, and faith and works are opposed; the latter being inconsistent with gospel-grace, Rom. 11:6.

2. The way of a sinner's justification laid down in the gospel excludes boasting, Rom. 3:27. But justification by works excludes it not, *ibid.* but leaves ground for it, Rom. 4:2. It is the design of the gospel to exclude it, Eph. 2:9. So that that way is opposite to the design of the gospel.

3. Lastly, All our good works are imperfect, Isa. 64:6 and they are mixed with many sinful works, Jam. 3:2. So that they can never make a righteousness which is truly and properly so in the eye of the law. And therefore to declare a man righteous on the account of them, would be to declare besides the truth. But 'we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth,' Rom. 2:2. It must be a perfect righteousness on which a person can be justified before a holy, just God. For the relaxation of the gospel is not, that an imperfect righteousness is accepted instead of a perfect one, Rom. 3 ult. This perfect righteousness can never be patched up of our imperfect pieces of obedience.

Nay, suppose we could perfectly obey the law from the moment of our conversion, yea, of our birth, all is due for itself. How could that satisfy for the sin we were born with, or our sins before conversion? Repentance and tears cannot satisfy. Without shedding of blood there is no remission. And if once the law get down the sinner to be satisfied of him, how shall he get up again?

And neither can they contribute so much as in part to justify us. For, (1.) At that rate the grace of God should be so far excluded, and some room left for boasting. (2.) The cleanest of our own robes would effectually ruin us, if not washed in the Lamb's blood. And (3.) Christ's righteousness is perfect, and not dealt by shreds.

SECONDLY, Positively. The righteousness of Christ is the procuring cause of our justification. In handling of this, I shall shew,

1. What Christ's righteousness is.
2. That we are justified by Christ's righteousness.
3. What way a sinner can be justified by a righteousness not wrought by himself, but by Christ.
4. How the justifying of a sinner thus consists with the honour of God's justice, and of his law.
5. How it consists with free grace.

First, I shall shew what Christ's righteousness is. There is a twofold righteousness of Christ. (1.) His essential righteousness, which he had from eternity as God. This was common to all the three persons, and natural; and therefore cannot be that righteousness of Christ whereby sinners are justified. (2.) His Mediatory righteousness, peculiar to him as the Father's servant, and the Mediator betwixt God and man. This is it. And that was his conformity to the law, in the perfect obedience he gave it, when he put his neck under the yoke of the law for an elect world, to satisfy it, in all that it had to demand of them.

1. He obeyed the commands of it, Phil. 2:18. All the ten commands in their utmost extent had their due from him, in both tables. He was born holy, without sin; he lived without blemish, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners; and was ever doing good. His obedience was universal; as to all the commands, he kept

them; perfect as to every command, in the degrees of it required by the law; constant and perpetual, without the least interruption; and voluntary and unconstrained, in respect of the principle of heartiness and willingness in it. Thus he did, as became him, fulfil all righteousness, Matth. 3:15.

2. He suffered the penalty of the law, which had been broken, Phil. 2:8. The elect's debt was charged upon him completely, and he answered for it. Then 'he restored that which he took not away,' Psal. 69:4. Death was the penalty, Gen. 2:17. And death in its various shapes seized on him. The forerunners of it met him at his first entrance into the world, when he was born in a very low condition, and was forced to be carried into Egypt, to save him from Herod's bloody hands. They hung about him all the days of his life, so that he was a man of sorrows, though not of sin. At length death advanced against him with all its joint forces together: and heaven, earth, and hell, all set on him together, till they brought him to the dust of death; and then he was carried death's prisoner to the grave, where he lay till it was declared the debt was paid, and the law had no more to demand.

Thus he conformed himself to the law, and satisfied it in all points. And this was his righteousness, and that very righteousness upon which every believing sinner is justified, as a debtor is absolved from the creditor's libel of debt, seeing the debt is paid by a cautioner.

Secondly, I shall shew that we are justified by the righteousness of Christ.

1. This is the plain doctrine of the scriptures of the Old Testament, where he is called 'our righteousness,' Jer. 23:6. See Isa. 45:24, 25. The apostle, 1 Cor. 1:30 tells us, that he is 'made righteousness to us,' not by affecting our righteousness, as he is our sanctification, for then justification and sanctification should be one and the same; but by imputation. And 2 Cor. 5:21. 'We are made the righteousness of God in him.' This was the only righteousness Paul desired to shelter

himself under, Phil. 3:9. In a word, he is the second Adam, Rom. 5:18, 19. 'Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners: so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.'

2. Our justification is the justification of the ungodly, Rom. 4:5; which cannot be therefore by our own righteousness, but the righteousness of another, even of a Redeemer, according to that, Rom. 5:9. 'Much more being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him;' our sins being imputed to him, and his righteousness to us, Gal. 3:13. 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.'

3. Lastly, There is nothing else we can lay claim to, which can satisfy the law. And it must needs be satisfied ere the sinner can be justified. For the law must be magnified and made honourable. Hence the scripture does so much notice, that by this way the law is established, which otherwise would be undermined, Rom. 3:31 its righteousness fulfilled, Rom. 8:4 and hath its end for perfection, chap. 10:4.

Thirdly, I proceed to shew, what way a sinner can be justified by a righteousness not wrought by himself, but by Christ. This will be clear, if ye consider these four concurring grounds.

1. Christ's suretyship which he voluntarily took on himself, Heb. 7:22. What Christ did and suffered, he did and suffered as a public person, for an elect world, not as a private person for himself. They took on the debt, he paid it for them; what the law or justice had to demand of him, he undertook to clear for their behoof. Thus a foundation is laid for justification by his righteousness.

2. The gospel-offer wherein Christ and all his salvation and benefits are freely offered to all such as will receive the same. There he is offered in a suitableness to the needs of sinners, Rev. 3:18. And,

amongst other things, Christ with his righteousness, is offered to the unrighteous; as with his sanctifying Spirit to the unholy. Thus his righteousness is in a fair way to become theirs, as a free gift, to be theirs to whom it is offered.

3. The faith of the elect, whereby Christ's righteousness becomes actually theirs, Gal. 2:16. 'Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ; that we might be justified by the faith of Jesus Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.' For it is the very nature of faith to receive the free gift of righteousness, and by our receiving it upon the offer, it becomes ours. But there is no way to receive Christ's righteousness, but with himself; for God gives not Christ's benefits apart from himself, but with himself, which is the way of the covenant. And hence we may see three things:

(1.) That it is by faith only Christ's righteousness becomes ours, and that we have an actual interest in it, and are put in possession of it, Phil. 3:9.—'The righteousness which is by faith.' Whatever foundation may be laid for it in the decree of God's election, and in Christ's satisfaction in our stead, yet it is not but by faith that we are possessed of it, or can plead it before the Lord. For as Adam's sin cannot hurt us till we have a being in him naturally; so Christ's righteousness cannot profit us till we be in him by faith.

(2.) How Christ's righteousness becomes ours by faith. Faith unites us to Christ in the way of the spiritual marriage-covenant, Eph. 2:17. Being united to him, we have a communion with him in all the benefits of his purchase, and so in his righteousness, which is one of the chief of them. He himself is ours by faith; and so all that is his is ours for our good. This union being most real, the communion is so too. And hence we are said to be 'crucified with him,' Gal. 2:20; 'buried with him,' Rom. 6:4; yea, 'raised with him,' Eph. 2:6.

(3.) How we are justified by faith. Not that faith is our righteousness; for our righteousness is not our faith, but we get it by faith, Phil. 3:9. We are justified by it instrumentally, as we say one is enriched by a marriage, when by it he gets what makes him rich. So that faith is that whereby the soul is married to Christ; and being married to him, has communion with him in his righteousness, which justifies the person before God.

4. God's imputation, whereby he reckons Christ's righteousness to be the believer's in law: as the judge sustains the husband's payment for the wife's, and so absolves her from any action the pursuer can have against her for the debt, Rom. 4:6. This imputation or reckoning of the judge is according to the truth of the thing, Christ's righteousness being really the believer's righteousness antecedently to the imputation, namely, by faith. So that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer, because it is really his; and it is not therefore really his, because it is imputed to him.

Fourthly, I come now to shew how the justifying of a sinner thus consists with the honour of God's justice, and of his law. Very well does it so consist; for God's justice and law have more honour by Christ's obedience and death, than they could have had by the obedience or death of the justified party.

1. What are all the creatures together in comparison of the Son of God, in point of greatness and excellency? Did David's men say of him, who was but a creature of their own kind, 'Thou art worth ten thousand of us?' 2 Sam. 18:3 so may not we say of him, who was the Father's fellow, Thou art worth ten thousand worlds of us? When a king puts his own Son, and heir to the crown, to death, for transgressing the laws, his justice is more conspicuous, and the law more honoured, than by the execution of a thousand ordinary malefactors. So that we may say, that God's justice, and respect to his law, appeared more in mount Calvary, than it does in hell; for in the one was God, in the other were creatures groaning out for a broken law.

2. Suppose the company of the justified had, for the honour of the law and justice, been all sent to hell together; yet they would ever have been but satisfying, they never could have come up to the full satisfaction, so as there might be no more to demand of them. For infinite justice can never be completely satisfied by a finite creature; and therefore hell-torments are eternal. But here, by Jesus Christ, justice gets the least and last farthing paid down? and the law has till it can demand no more, John 19:30.

3. Lastly, By Christ's obedience and death, law and justice are honoured both actively and passively. Now, if Adam had stood and been justified by his works, they had been only glorified actively. If the now justified had been damned for their sin, and suffered for it for ever, they had been only glorified passively; but now, by this way of the Mediator's suretyship, they are glorified both ways. He has obeyed the law's commands to the least. He has suffered the wrath and curse of God to the utmost, which the creature could never have done; and borne it with that patience, submission, and resignation, and is quite beyond the reach of a mere creature, Isa. 53:7.

So the believer's justification is on the surest grounds. The justice of God and his law consent to it, as that which is more for their honour than the ruin of the sinner.

Fifthly, I come now to shew how the justification of a sinner by the righteousness of Christ consists with free grace. If our justification be thus purchased by the perfect obedience and satisfaction of Christ, how is it of free grace? I answer, Very well. For,

1. God accepted of a surety, when he might have held by the sinner himself, and insisted that the soul that sinned might die, Rom. 5:8. What was it but free grace that moved him, when the neck of all the elect was upon the block, to allow it to rise up without receiving the fatal blow, and accepting of a Surety in their room? Could any man oblige the Judge to this? God did this freely.

2. God himself provided the Surety, John 3:16. When Isaac lay bound on the altar, God provided the ram for the burnt-offering. What could man have done to get a cautioner when he broke, in the first covenant? Among all the beasts of the field there could not be found an atoning sacrifice, Ps. 40:6. All the angels in heaven could not have afforded a cautioner. But free grace set infinite wisdom on work to find out one, which pitched on the Son of God, Psal. 89:19. So the Father gives his own Son, and the Son takes on man's nature, and pays the debt. What is there here but riches of grace to the justified sinner? So it is God's own righteousness, Phil. 3:9 freely given to us. The which if it had not, as the tree fell, it behoved to have lain for ever.

3. Lastly, God demands nothing of us for it. It is a rich purchase, a dear purchase, the price of blood: but the righteousness and the justification are given to us most freely through faith. That is, we Have it, for Take and have. And the very hand wherewith we receive it, namely faith, is the free gift of God unto us, Eph. 2:8. So that most evident it is, that we are justified freely by his grace.

I come now to make some practical improvement of this important subject.

USE I. Of information. From what is said, learn,

1. That they are poor fools who have slight thoughts of sin and guilt. How many think very little of unpardoned guilt? There is a band lying on their head, obliging them to bear God's wrath for their sin; yet they rest in peace. They are lying under a sentence of condemnation, and know not how soon they may be led out to execution; yet they are at ease. They are drawing on more guilt daily without fear, and so making their bonds stronger. O, Sirs! look here and see the evil of sin, the dreadful nature of guilt. Nothing less could take sin away, and break asunder these bands, than the death of our Redeemer. Behold it in this glass, and be afraid of it.

2. How ill does it set us to have cheap thoughts of pardon! Num. 14:17, 19. 'God forgive me,' is a common word in some people's mouths, set off with a laugh. Most people fancy it is an easy thing to get a pardon. They know God is full of mercy, Christ of bowels, no more ado but to make a confession, pray to God to forgive them, and all is well; as if they might live like lions, and then leap like lambs out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom. But if ever ye get a pardon, ye will change your mind, and find it has cost Christ dear; it is written in his blood, and will cost you broken bones ere ye obtain it.

3. Faith is absolutely necessary, Rom. 5:1. There is no justification without faith, and no access to heaven for the unjustified. While you continue in a state of unbelief, guilt girds you about as cords of death. And till ye believe and come to Christ, none of them all will be loosed, but they will weigh you down to destruction. O then come to Christ, and believe, accept of the Cautioner in the covenant. Without union with him, ye can have no share in his righteousness, and without faith no union with Christ.

4. No sin is so great, but one may be justified from it, if he will come to Christ, and close with him, 2 Cor. 5:21. It is Christ's righteousness upon which a sinner is justified, and that is an everlasting righteousness, a righteousness of infinite value; and no sin is so great but it will swallow it up. There is none so broad but this white raiment will cover it. No guilt so strong but this will break it.

5. Most miserable will their case be, that shall be left to feel their own weight, Psal. 94 ult. He 'shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off.' Many see not their need of Christ and his righteousness now: but when that falls on them for their own sin, that fell on him for the sins of those he bare, they will find their punishment like Cain's greater than what they can bear. What the Cautioner was put to in paying the debt of sin, may fright every one with the thoughts of their answering for their own.

6. Lastly, Happy is the case of the justified, Psal. 32:1. They are secured as to their state, no more under wrath, Rom. 8:1. Their eternal salvation is sure, and can never fail, Rom. 8:30. They have got over the gulph of condemnation, and shall never fall therein. Whom God justifies now, he will not condemn hereafter.

USE II. Of trial. By what is said, ye may try your state, whether ye be justified or not. And ye have reason to put this matter to trial accurately and exactly. For,

1. One thing is sure, that every man is once under a sentence of condemnation, Eph. 2:3. Gal. 3:10. Now, what course have ye taken to get from under this? and if ye have been aiming at it, have ye carried your point, or not? No man is carried out of the state of condemnation in a morning dream; most men abide in the condemned state they were born in. O try it, whether ye be brought out of it or not.

2. As your state is in this life in point of justification, so it will be determined at death and the last day, Eccl. 9:10. This life is the time of trial; in the other, the judgment will pass upon men according to what they have been in this world. Now the door of mercy stands open for pardons; but death being once come, there is no more access to a pardon. As the tree falls, it must lie.

3. Men are very apt to mistake their state in this matter. Many draw a pardon to themselves, that God will not set his seal to, and all it serves for is to blind their own eyes, Isa. 44:20. The foolish virgins dreamed very confidently of peace with God; but they met with a sad disappointment. They called themselves the friends of the Bridegroom, but he shut the door on them as on his enemies.

4. Lastly, A mistake in this point is very dangerous. It makes people let the time of obtaining a pardon slip, as fancying they have it already. The foolish virgins might have got oil to their lamps, if they had seen the want of it, ere it was out of time. And thus it brings a

mining surprise, while people sleeping to death, in their dreams of peace, are awakened by the noise of war that God will have with them for ever and ever, without any more possibility of truce. Now, ye may try it by the following things.

1. Have ye been apprehended, sisted before God the Judge, and brought to a reckoning of your sins? No man gets out his absolution before the Lord, till he appear and answer to his libel. This is necessary to make the sinner flee to Christ; for this end the law was given, and for this end it is brought into the conscience, Gal. 3:24. That state of sin which the soul never was made truly sensible of, does without doubt continue. They that never saw themselves in a state of condemnation are to this day under it. To what end should one have looked for healing to the brazen serpent, that were not stung with the fiery serpents? If the law has not had this effect on you to let you see your sin, and stopped your mouth before the Lord, ye are not come to Christ for justification. But if ye have seen your sin and state of condemnation by nature, and so have fled for mercy to Jesus Christ, then ye may conclude ye are justified.

2. I would ask you, Have ye been carried freely out of yourselves to Jesus Christ for righteousness, renouncing all other confidences in whole and in part, Phil. 3:7, 8? There are many who, being convinced of sin, fall down and beg pardon, and hope for it upon their prayers, repentance, and reformation: but they never consider how the law shall be answered by a perfect righteousness. But the justified person sees, that there is no pardon to be got, without a righteousness that will satisfy the law, and that no work of his can do that; therefore he lays hold on Christ for his righteousness, and pleads that for pardon. They unite with the Mediator by faith, and so he spreads his skirt over them. They get in under the covert of the Mediator's blood, and place their confidence there, believing that it is of sufficiency to shield them from wrath, and trusting upon his righteousness for that end, Phil. 3:3. They continue not in mere suspense, James 1:6, 7 but so wrestle against doubting, as to cast their anchor, and lay their weight for eternity, upon the righteousness of Christ.

3. The dominion and reigning power of sin is broken in the justified, Rom. 6:14. Where the condemning power of sin, is removed, its reigning power is also taken away. If the condemned man get his remission, he is taken out of his irons, his prison, and the jailor's power; and so the pardoned sinner is no more taken captive by Satan at his will, 2 Tim. 2 ult. Will the liar lie on, the swearer swear on, the drunkard drink on, the formalist still hold on with his mere form of godliness, and hope that God has pardoned him? No; let no man deceive himself. Those chains of reigning lusts that are still rattling about thee, declare thee to be yet a condemned man, Rom. 8:1, 2. Doubt ye not but if ye were justified, ye would be washed? 1 Cor. 6:9, 10, 11. To pretend to the pardon of sin which thou art still living and going on in, is practical blasphemy, as if Christ were the minister of sin; it is a turning the grace of God into licentiousness, which will bring a heavy vengeance at length. But if the reigning power of sin, be broken in thee, thou art a justified man; it is a sign thou art healing, when the strength of the disease of sin is abating.

4. Habitual tenderness of conscience with respect to sin, temptations, and appearance of evil, is a good sign of a justified state, Acts 24:16. Burnt bairns dread the fire; and the man who has brought himself under a sentence of death, if he escape it may be thought, he will beware of falling into the snare again, Isa. 38:17 compare ver. 15. Justified persons may fall into acts of untenderness many a time; but habitual untenderness is a black mark, when people habitually and ordinarily take to themselves a sinful latitude in their thoughts, words, or actions. It is a sad sign that sin has never been made very bitter to them, when they can so easily go into it. It is easy to pretend to tenderness in opinions, and with respect to church-differences; but would to God there appeared more tenderness among us in matters of morality, that there were more sobriety among us, that people who have money to spare, would give it to the poor, and not lay it out in a way that God has so often visibly blasted, or spend it on their lusts; that men would not by their presence or otherwise encourage penny-wed-dings (condemned both by the law of the land and the church,) these nurseries of

profaneness, which have so often among us left a stink behind them in the nostrils of truly tender persons, and before a holy God. I would recommend to you the apostle's general rule, Phil. 4:8. 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.'

5. Lastly, The fruits of faith in a holy life. We are justified by faith without works; but that faith that justifies is always followed with good works, Acts 15:9. If the curse be taken away, under which the soul remains barren, it will become fruitful in the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. 5:22, 23. Our faith justifies our persons as it receives Christ with his righteousness; but our faith must be justified by our works, i. e. it must be by our good works evidenced to be true faith. Therefore the apostle James disputes against that faith that is without works, shewing it to be no true justifying faith, James 2:17, 18. There is a difference betwixt justification and sanctification, but they are inseparable companions. And no man can evidence his justification without the fruits of holiness. Examine yourselves by these things, what state ye are in before God.

USE III. Of exhortation. This I shall address both to sinners and saints.

First, To sinners yet in the state of sin and wrath. Here is good news of pardon and acceptance with God for you. I would exhort you to be concerned to get out of the state of wrath and condemnation; and while God is sitting on a throne of grace, do not slip the opportunity, but sue out your absolution from before the Lord in his own way. Take no rest till ye be justified before God through Christ. To make way for this exhortation, I will lay before you the following motives.

Mot. 1. While you are out of a justified state, a sentence of condemnation stands against thee in the court of heaven, and thou knowest not how soon it may be executed, Gal. 3:10. John 3:18 and

ult. If thou wert under a sentence of death by the laws of men, wouldst thou not bestir thyself for a pardon, if there were any hope? But, poor soul, thou art under a sentence of eternal death; and yet thou livest at ease. God's law has condemned thee as a malefactor, his truth confirms the sentence, and justice craves execution. All things are ready for it. Psal. 7:12, 13. When thou liest down, thou hast no security that it shall not be executed ere thou arise; and when thou goest out, thou hast no security that it shall not be executed ere thou come in. Only long-suffering procures thee a reprieve one day after another, to see if thou wilt sue out a pardon. But as secure as thou art the sword of justice hangs over thy head by the hair of long-tired patience; and if that break, thou art a dead man.

Mot. 2. A pardon and acceptance with God is not so easily obtained as people generally think. God gives pardon freely, yet none come by it lightly. They that get it, get it so as they are taught to prize the mercy, Mic. 7:18. They that know not the evil of sin nor the holy just nature of God, and that were never pressed with the sense of unpardoned guilt, think it a very easy thing to get a pardon, as if there were no more but to ask and receive. But I would have you to consider,

(1.) The justifying and pardoning of a sinner is one of the greatest works of God. It is a greater work than to make a world. God had no more ado but to say, in the creation, 'Let there be light, &c. and there was.' But when sinners were to be absolved, justice stands up for satisfaction. The truth of God for the honour of a broken law, wisdom is set awork to find out a way how pardoning mercy may get a vent; and for that cause the Son of God pays down the price of blood to buy the absolution. If God could have absolved the sinner from guilt and punishment by a bare word, how would he have passed by that easy way, and fetched a compass by the blood of his own Son? John 3:16. And after all it is a work of power to be exercised according to the greatness of mercy, Numb. 14:17, 19.

(2.) Sin is the greatest of evils, no wonder it be hard to take it away. It is of all things most contrary to the holy nature of God. Hab. 1:13. When thou goest on in thy sin, thou art engaged against all the attributes of God. It is a daring of his justice, an invading of his sovereignty, a defying of his power, an abusing of his patience, and a despising of his love, mercy, and goodness. It contradicts his will; thereby the potsherds strive against their Maker, and lusts are set up against his holy law. It robs him of the glory due to him from his creatures, and turns to his dishonour. When God had perfected the frame of the world, and made man and all the creatures for his glory, sin entering marred the whole frame, and made the workmanship of his own hands dishonour him. O! is it not a great work then to get a pardon, and all these injuries buried in forgetfulness with a holy jealous God!

(3.) God's elect have endured sad breakings of heart from the time they are made sensible of sin, till they have got their absolution from it, Acts 2:37. They have known the terror of the Lord, to the breaking of their bones, ere they could get a glimpse of his reconciled countenance. Think ye as light of pardon as ye will, if ever the Lord come to give you a spiritual medicine to cause you sweat out the poison of sin, it will make you sick at the heart, if it bring you not to the last gasp, Isa. 33 ult.

(4.) Lastly, If ever ye get a pardon, there will be an awful solemnity at the giving of it, Psal. 89:14 and it will be a very strong faith that will not receive it with a trembling hand, Hos. 11:10 compare chap. 3 ult. 'They shall fear the Lord,' Heb. 'fear to the Lord.' For God gives no pardons but what are written in the blood of a Redeemer, sufficiently testifying his detestation of the crime; none are got but through the wounds of a Redeemer. So that the very throne of grace stands on justice fully satisfied; and thou shalt be made to say when thou gettest the pardon, as Jacob did of the place where he had slept all night, 'How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven,' Gen. 28:17.

Therefore look on it as a matter of the greatest weight, that will not be slightly managed, and to purpose too.

Mot. 3. Consider the dreadful disadvantages that attend an unjustified state. While ye are unjustified,

1. Ye can have no access to God, nor communion with him, Rom. 3:3. Unpardoned guilt is a partition-wall betwixt God and you, Isa. 59:2. It stands as the angel with the flaming sword to guard the tree of life, that ye can have no access to it. It is true, ye may attend public ordinances, and go about private and secret duties; but they are all lost, as to communion with God, in the great gulph of an unpardoned state. Ye cannot have a comfortable word out of his mouth, nor a smile of his face.

2. Ye can have no peace with God, Rom. 5:1. What Jehu said to Joram, God says to every unjustified sinner pretending peace with him, 'What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts, are so many?' 2 Kings 9:22. It is sin that makes God an enemy to the work of his own hands; and while it is not forgiven, there can be no reconciliation. How can they think they can have peace with God whom his law condemns? What peace ye have in your consciences, arises from stupidity and presumption; it is stolen, and is none of God's allowance, Isa. 57 ult. Neither could ye command it, or retain it, if ye saw your case.

3. Ye can have no fruits of holiness. The conscience must be purged, ere one can serve God acceptably, Heb. 9:11. or do any work good in God's sight, 1 Tim. 1:5. Justification and sanctification are inseparable, and a justified state goes before a holy life; 'for to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,' Rom. 4:5. While a man is unpardoned, the curse lies on him; and it is a blasting withering curse, like that on the fig-tree, that no fruit of holiness can grow where it comes. For it stops the communication of sanctifying influences; and the earth shall sooner bring forth its fruits while the

influences of the heavens are restrained, than a soul shall do any good work without the influences of Christ's Spirit, John 15:6.

4. All you do is turned to sin by this means, Psal. 14:1. A soul unjustified, is as a tainted vessel that turns every liquor that is put into it. Hence your very civil actions are turned to sin, Prov. 21:4 natural actions, Zech. 7:6 yea, and your religious actions too, Prov. 15:1. Isa. 66:3. For as the purest liquor put into a vessel for base uses is loathed, so are the best performances of an unpardoned sinner, by a holy God. For whatever they be as to the matter of them, they are selfish and hateful as to the principle end, and manner.

5. Lastly, Hence your accounts are running on every day and moment to the avenging justice of God, Rom. 2:5. Thou art still deeper and deeper in that fearful debt; the cords of thy guilt are growing stronger and stronger. Thy crimes and grounds of condemnation are multiplied more and more; and though it is only dying for all, yet the more thy guilt is increased, the more will be thy punishment. It is true, that every one is sinning daily; but a justified person's debts are not charged upon him for eternal wrath, but temporary chastisements; so that theirs is but an account of pennies, while thine is that of talents.

Mot. 4. Consider the unspeakable advantages of a pardoned justified state. He that is in that state, is a happy man, whatever his case be otherwise in the world, Psal. 22:1.—He may meet with many crosses in a present world, but the white stone given him of God will make him happy for all that, Hab. 3:17. One may be rich, yet reprobate; his portion fat, but his soul lean; applauded on the earth, but damned in hell. These things come from God's hand; and the crown of worldly felicity set on with his bare hand, he will kick off with his foot at length. But a pardon comes from his heart, as an eternal love token, Rom. 11:29. O! let the happiness of a justified state engage you to seek after it. Get into the state of pardon; and,

1. Ye shall have peace with God, Rom. 5:1. Sin is the only controversy betwixt God and a soul; when that is removed, the parties are reconciled, and meet together in peace. God justifying the sinner, lays by the legal enmity he bare to him, while he lived in a state of sin. He pursues him no more with wrath or curse. The heavens that are now black above your heads shall clear up, and ye shall enjoy a pleasant sunshine, if the cloud of guilt were dispelled. O, Sirs! do ye not value peace with God? If ye do, then seek to be in this state.

2. It will bring you other peace besides. Peace of conscience follows upon a justified state. Unpardoned guilt makes a foul and condemning conscience, which gnaws a man like a worm. But when one gets his conscience sprinkled with the Redeemer's blood, and his sin pardoned, the conscience is cleansed, Heb. 9:14. And then it is turned to a good conscience, which sings sweetly in a man's bosom, 2 Cor. 1:12. Yea, ye shall have peace with the creatures, that are at war with the unpardoned sinner, Job 5:23. Having thus gained the favour of the Master of the great family, the servants shall all turn to be your friends.

3. Ye shall have access to God with confidence and holy boldness, Eph. 3:12. 1 John 3:21. God shall no more sit on a tribunal of strict justice to you, with the flaming sword before him; but on a throne of grace, with a rainbow round about it, Rev. 4:3. And ye may come to him with all your wants, complaints, &c. as unto a friend, yea, a Father in Christ, confidently expecting all good things from him, Job 33:24, 26. For being justified, ye have a satisfaction to plead, upon which he can deny you no good thing; ye are cloathed with a righteousness that makes you spotless, and are under a covert, where love and favour shine continually.

4. Ye shall be delivered from the dominion of sin, Rom. 6:14 and be made to bring forth the fruits of holiness, Col. 2:13. As soon as ever the remission is passed the seals, so soon the orders are given to deliver the prisoner, to beat off his chains, and open the prison-door, and set him at liberty. The apostle tells us, that the strength of sin is

the law,' 1 Cor. 15:56 namely, the law condemning and cursing the sinner; so that the sinner being under the curse, sin reigns in him with a full sway, as the thorns and briars in the cursed ground. But the law's curse and condemning power being removed in justification, sin loses its strength. And the blessing coming in its room, the soul is made fruitful in holiness. Hence faith's sanctifying virtue is so much insisted on in the word, Acts 15:9.

5. It will take the venom out of your crosses, and the strongest afflictions ye meet with, 1 Cor. 15:55. The venom of afflictions is the curse in a cross; but pardon takes out that. A bee-sting your troubles may have after that, but the serpent's sting shall no more be found in them. A pardoned state sanctifies crosses to a man; and a sanctified cross is better than an unsanctified comfort. A loss with God's favour, is more than an enjoyment with God's wrath.

6. It will sweeten your mercies with an additional sweetness, and make a small mercy more valuable than the greatest earthly comfort an unpardoned sinner can have, Psal. 37:16. Who would not chuse to live at peace in a cottage, on coarse fare, than to be in the case of one under a sentence of death, liberally fed in a castle till the execution-day? A mercy without a pardon will go a short way; the man may cry, 'There is death in the pot,' Mal. 2:2. But a pardon puts a blessing in a mercy, purifies and refines it, putting a stamp of God's good will on it, Gen. 33:11.

7. It will make all things work together for your good, Rom. 8:28. God's wrath and anger against a person mars all to him. It makes every thing work for his ruin: the unpardoned man's crosses are curses, and his good things as well as his evil things work against him, Prov. 1:32. But by the Lord's favour all things shall work through grace to bring the believer to glory. God is for him, who then can be against him? Whether the wind blow on his face, or on his back, it shall forward him to the happy harbour.

8. It is the way to live comfortably, Isa. 40:1, 2. None in all the world have so good a reason to live comfortably as the justified person. He that gets the white stone of the Lord's absolution, if he can but look on it, his soul may rejoice within him. If all things in the world were going wrong, he has that to comfort him, that God is his friend. However little he may have in hand, he has all the heavenly inheritance in hope. The uncomfortable life the pardoned sinner has, arises from want of consideration; but the more clearly he sees his matters, he will have the more comfort.

9. Lastly, It is the way to die safely and comfortably too. The pardoned sinner may triumph over death and the grave, Rom. 8:38, 39. 1 Cor. 15:55. When death comes to him, he has his discharge, it cannot harm him. As for the tribunal, he cannot be condemned there, for he is already justified. He shall swim safe through these dark waters, for the weight of guilt is removed, he cannot sink in them.

Mot. 5. A pardon is in your offer. There is none of us all under the sentence of condemnation, but may get it reversed, if we will come to Christ, and sue out an absolution in the Lord's own way, Isa. 55:7. He is a just God we have to do with, but there is a way how pardoning mercy may reach us in a full consistency with justice. The white flag of peace does yet hang out, and the market of free grace stands open. There is an act of grace and full indemnity through Jesus Christ proclaimed in the gospel. Come in, sinners, and take the benefit of it. Why will ye stand out, and despise the King of Heaven's free pardon?

Object. My sins are so great, that I can have no hope of pardon, whatever others may. Ans. Neither the greatness nor the multitude of your sins, nor your backsliding into them again and again, put you beyond the reach of pardon. For observe, I pray you, the foundation of pardon is Christ's righteousness, and that is the righteousness of God, Rom. 10:3. Now, your sins are the sins of a creature; and shall not the righteousness of God be able to remove the unrighteousness

of the creature? And it is to all, and upon all that believe, Rom. 3:22 and remember, as the one abounds, the other superabounds, Rom. 5:20.

God is pleased to heap words of grace one upon another to put tempted sinners in hopes of pardon, Joel 2:13. 'Rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil,' Isa. 1:18. 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'—Chap. 55:7. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' And he has set up many instances of pardoning mercy, that none may despair of finding mercy that will come to him in his own way. Adam, the leading sinner in the world, was pardoned. Manasseh, who gave up himself to the most gross sins of devilry, murder, &c. yet received a pardon. Paul, who was a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious, obtained mercy. And the very Jews that murdered the Lord of glory, were pardoned through his blood.

These instances of mercy are indeed abused to the encouraging of sinners to go on in their sin: but they were never designed for that; and it is a dreadful sign, when the very gospel-news of pardon become a trap and a snare. But God designed them for thy encouragement, O trembling sinner, that would fain come to God through Christ for pardon, if thou durst; and by these he bids thee welcome, Eph. 2:7. Come forward, then, and sue for thy pardon.

Mot. 6. The time of pardoning grace will not last, Isa. 55:6. 'Seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.' The day will come when God will not be intreated, when abused patience will break forth into fury, Luke 13:24, 25. 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate:

for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence you are.' Beware lest ye sit your day of grace, and it come to that, ye find no place for repentance, though ye should seek it carefully with tears. Remember those that were bidden to the supper, and shifted, and were excluded, Luke 14:24. Delay no more. A moment's delay may be an eternal loss.

Lastly, I beseech you remember, that your eternal state depends on your being justified now or not. If ye be justified now, ye shall be saved eternally; if not, ye are lost for ever. And how dreadful will the condemnation of those be, who by slighting an offered pardon trample on the blood of Christ, which was shed for the remission of sins!

I shall conclude this use of exhortation with a few directions.

1. Labour to get your hearts wrought up to a deep concern for a pardoned state. And for this cause, believe your miserable state by nature, that ye are once condemned. Take a view of the holy, righteous law, and your innumerable transgressions of it, besides your sinful nature. Look to the flaming justice of God? behold it in the case of the damned, in the case of Christ suffering, and see what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God.

2. Go to God in Christ, and confess your sins, and condemn yourselves. Lay them out before God with shame and confusion of face, with their several aggravations. Make a full and free confession, insisting most on those sins that have been most dishonouring to God in you. Acknowledge yourselves justly condemned by the law, and God to be righteous, if he should put the sentence into execution.

Lastly, Solemnly and sincerely accept of Christ in the covenant of grace held forth in the gospel. Receive him with his righteousness,

and enter under the covert of his blood. And lay all your guilt over on him, believing his ability and willingness to remove it. And accepting of Christ for justification and sanctification, ye shall be accepted and pardoned.

Exhort. 2. To justified persons. This privilege calls you to several duties.

1. Love the Lord, and love him much, for much is forgiven you. This may be oil to that holy flame, and therefore love will continue in heaven for ever.

2. Be of a forgiving disposition, Eph. 4 ult. 'Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.' The same Saviour that brought in remission of sins, binds us to love our enemies. And the bitter revengeful spirit against those we think have wronged us, is a sad sign that our own sin is unforgiven of God, Matt. 6:12. 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.' They who have found what a dreadful weight sin unpardoned is, and have at length got it removed, will thereby be helped to forgive.

3. Walk humbly. Ye are justified, but it is by the righteousness of another. Ye are pardoned, but it was procured to you by the satisfaction of a Saviour. Your debt is paid, your discharge is got up; but thanks to free grace, not to you, for it.

4. Bear your troubles and crosses in a world patiently.—Your life that was forfeited by sin is safe by grace; therefore take thankfully any troubles you meet with. For why should a living-man complain, especially one that deserved to die, and yet is adjudged to life?

5. Lastly, Walk tenderly. God pardoning a sinner, dismisseth him as Christ did the penitent adulteress, John 8:11. 'Go, and sin no more.' Let not your broken bones be forgotten, but walk softly all your years. And if ye be pardoned, shew it by your holy and tender walk.

ADOPTION

2 COR. 6:18.—And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

THESE words do hold forth the singular privilege of those that obey the call of the gospel, ver. 17.—'Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.' That call is not a call to separate from a church, but from those that are out of the church, ver. 14. 'Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?' not only from outward visible communion with idolaters, but to separate from the unconverted to inward invisible communion with the family of God, ver 18. In a word, it is a call to come out of the world lying in wickedness, and to join the heavenly society.

There are but two families in the world, and to one of the two every man and woman belongs. One is Satan's family, the other God's. And these are the two terms of effectual calling. (1.) The term from which sinners are called by the gospel; that is Satan's family, which they are born in, Psal. 45:10. And it is made up of all the unconverted world, and fallen angels. These have a dreadful communion among themselves under one head, the devil. That is the family of unbelievers, unrighteousness, and Belial. And to come out of this the gospel calls you, ver. 17. 'Wherefore come out from among them, &c. (2.) The term to which; that is God's family, made up of saints, holy angels, and Christ as the Elder Brother having dominion over the family; he their head, and the head of Christ is God, 1 Cor. 11:3. That is the family of believers, righteousness, and Christ. And to this the gospel calls you to come.

Thus the text proposes a great privilege of those that are effectually called, that is, adoption into the family of God. And here consider,

1. The family they are brought into; it is that of the Lord Almighty. No body needed to adopt, but he that had something to give. The family which believers are taken into is a rich family, seeing the Head thereof is the Almighty, who because he is Almighty can, and because he is a Father will, make his own perfectly happy.

2. Upon whom this privilege is conferred; that is, those who come out of the world and the family of Satan, and answer the gospel-call. (1.) They are aliens, they are by nature strangers to the family they are taken into; they are of an ill house, that is an enemy to the house of heaven. And whatever house men would pitch on, it would not readily be such an one: but free grace takes people from such a house. (2.) But they are separatists from it, they are such as are sick of their father's house, and people that are their own, and come off from it by faith to the Lord upon the gospel-call. Like Ruth, they leave their natural country and kindred, and come to incorporate with that other society.

3. The relation they are put into in God's family. It were much if they of the house of hell might be received into the house of heaven, in the quality of sojourners to lodge a while there; more, if in quality of domestic servants; and more, if in quality of friends: but they are received in quality of children of the family. And as all relation is mutual, upon the one hand, God becomes their Father. That is a kindly word, and that he is to them. On the other, they become sons and daughters. Observe, how particular this promise is, expressly made to both sexes. Whatever privileges in external things men had of old, or yet have above women; yet in respect of spiritual privileges in Christ they are alike. The one are sons, and the other daughters, both children equally dear to our heavenly Father.

4. Lastly, The confirmation of this privilege, and the promise thereof, saith the Lord. If a man or angel had said it, it could hardly have gained credit, that there should be such an adoption. But God himself says it; and it is impious therefore to disbelieve it.

The sum of the words may be comprised in the following doctrine, viz.

DOCT. 'As adoption into God's family is the peculiar privilege of those that are effectually called, so whosoever will comply with the gospel-call, and come away, shall be adopted into God's family: God will be a Father to them, and they shall be his sons and daughters.'

This doctrine has two branches.

I. Adoption into God's family is the peculiar privilege of those that are effectually called.

II. Whosoever will comply with the gospel call, shall be adopted into God's family; God will be their Father, and they shall be his sons and daughters.

I shall prosecute these two in order.

I. Adoption into God's family is the peculiar privilege of those that are effectually called. Adoption follows our justification; and is 'an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.'

Here I shall endeavour to shew,

1. What adoption in general is.
2. What are the parts of adoption.
3. The properties of this adoption.
4. Apply the subject.

FIRST, I shall shew what adoption in the general is.—That we may understand this, we must consider, in the first place, what adoption among men is; and that is twofold.

1. Proper adoption, much used among the ancient Romans and Greeks, was a legal act, imitating nature, introduced for the comfort of those who wanted children, whereby one that was the natural child of another man became the son of the adopter. It was a judicial action done in presence of the magistrate; among the Greeks by way of a testament, signed and sealed in his presence; among the Romans, the adopter, the natural father, and the son, appearing before the magistrate, the adopter taking hold of the son, said, 'I avouch this person to be my son, and I have bought him with this money.' The natural father judicially yielded up his right to the adopter. And the magistrate adjudged him to be the adopter's son. The party being adopted, was made free of the city, and not only taken into the adopter's family, but ascribed into the tribe or fraternity of the adopter. It had place among those that either had no children at all, by their death or otherwise had no lawful children. But the law restrained them that they might not adopt, but in a suitableness to the quality of the adopter; so that a nobleman might not adopt a commoner, lest the dignity of the adopter should be stained by the meanness of the adopted.

2. Metaphorical adoption, which is ingrafting. Thus the stock adopts the branch that is cut off another tree, and put into another branch of it. For as the adopter takes another man's child, and nourishes him as his own; so the ingrafted branch is counted among the natural branches, and partakes with them of the sap of the stock. Hence you may see, that

Divine adoption is an act of God, whereby he does judicially take (and constitute) those that are by nature strangers to him, and none of his family, members of his family, and his own children, giving them the privileges of his children, or of his house as children. And it is twofold.

1. External and federal which is common to the members of the visible church, which is a society gathered out from the rest of the world, the visible family of God on earth, enjoying peculiar

privileges, beyond the rest of the world. This adoption belonged to Israel of old, Rom. 9:4. And God owned them as his sons in the midst of Egypt, Exod. 4:22, 23. But now it is extended to us Gentiles, Gal. 3:26, 27. This family has always, since Cain was cast out, been a separated family in the world, chosen out from among the rest; so that they are called 'the sons of God,' Gen. 6:2. And so it is still, and will be to the end.

This adoption, though it is really in itself a high dignity, so that, in comparison of them, the rest of the world are but as dogs to children, Matth. 15:26 yet it is not a saving relation to God. And it may be lost, as the Jews rejected did theirs. Nay one may retain it; and yet his natural relation to the devil remain, as to his internal state, so as he may be lost for ever notwithstanding it, John. 8:44. But this is not the adoption we inquire into; but,

2. An internal and saving adoption, which is peculiar to believers, or those effectually called and converted, which make up the invisible church and family of God on earth, enjoying spiritual privileges, beyond all others without or within the visible church. These are they that are chosen out from the unconverted world lying in wickedness, according to the decree of election, and brought and ingrafted into Christ, and made real members of his body, John 1:12, 13. These God adopts, judicially avouches them to be his sons and daughters, and Satan, their natural father, is obliged to quit his right to them; and they thereby are, and are accounted, no more of his family, but children of God, and have a right to the saving special privileges of the children of his family, Gal. 4:5. Eph. 1:5. Hence,

(1.) Adoption is not a real change of the sinner's nature; but, as justification a relative change of his state. By nature we are in a state of condemnation, but out of that we are brought in justification; and out of the state of alienation from God, by adoption. So that we are no more aliens and foreigners to the family of heaven, but domestics of it; no more the children of Satan, but of God, Eph. 2:19. Our names are enrolled among those of the family; and though a new

nature accompanies it, yet adoption itself is a new name, not a new nature, Rev. 2:17 though it is not an empty title, but has vast privileges attending it.

(2.). It is done in an instant, not carried on by degrees. For it is not capable of degrees, and there is no intermediate state betwixt sonship to God and to Satan; but as soon as ever a person believes in Christ, he is justified and adopted: as soon as the soul is married to Christ, she becomes a daughter of the house of heaven, and her relation to that of hell is extinguished, John 1:12. It is true, there will be at the great day a solemn declaration of that adoption, and the adopted will then be perfectly past their minority, and enter to the full possession of the inheritance in their whole man; in which sense the apostle says, 'We wait for the adoption,' Rom. 8:23. 'But now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is,' 1 John 3:2.

SECONDLY, I come to shew what are the parts of adoption. These are two. 1. The receiving the sinner into the number of God's children. 2. Giving him a right to their privileges. That we may the more distinctly take up this, we shall take a view of this whole blessed transaction, from the first to the last, together with the parties concerned in it. And,

1. The adopter is God, and in respect of dispensation the Father, the first person of the blessed Trinity, the Father of our Lord Jesus. For as the work of redemption is the Son's, and the work of our sanctification the Spirit's, so our justification and adoption are the Father's, Eph. 1:3, 5. And hence the Father's love is celebrated in this benefit, 1 John 3:1. 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God;' though not excluding that of the Son and the Holy Ghost, who are one God with him, and act their part in this blessed transaction, bringing it about. And because, God is the Sovereign of the universe, therefore

he is also the Judge, who passeth the sentence, and adjudgeth the adopted sons to himself.

2. The party adopted is an elect sinner; for it is done in pursuance of God's eternal predestination, and falls on those, and only those who are elected to it from eternity, Eph. 1:5. God from all eternity foreseeing, that though Adam was to be created a son of God in his own likeness, yet he would degenerate, and all his race be born children of wrath, and of the devil, resembling Satan naturally, and prone to obey him, as children do a father, John 8:44 decreed, not to lose the whole race, but to bring a certain number of them into his family again by the way of adoption, the way of natural (Adam's) sonship failing, leaving others to continue in their natural father's house and family. And all these elect ones were known from eternity to God, 2 Tim. 2:19.

3. The natural father is the devil, that enemy of God, John 8:44. His children they are by nature as well as others. He has a great family, one part whereof dwells in the lower house; these are the damned spirits in hell. And of those that are once got thither, there is no more hope nor possibility of their ever getting out of his family. These are entered to the inheritance of their father in almost full tale already. Another part of them are sojourning in the upper house of this world, and that house is very throng with his family. It contains a people that are his, Psal. 45:10. Many entire nations and families are there, wherein there are none but his. Nay, there is a world of men and women he has in this house, 1 John 5:19; and himself is god and father of the family, 2 Cor. 4:4 who all can have no hope of a better inheritance than he has given them, even the wrath and curse prepared for him and his. It is out of this part of Satan's family that the adopted are taken.

4. The suitableness of this adoption to the glory of the Adopter, and to his family. We dare not say, he needed to take this way of furnishing himself with children, as in the case of adoption among men. He was happy in himself from all eternity, in the Son by eternal

generation, when there was neither man nor angel in his family. And had all been lost together, his happiness had not been one whit diminished. But we may say, that this device of adoption was a device becoming him, and very agreeable to his glory and family.

His family did originally consist of two sorts of sons, angels and men, (not to speak here of his eternal Son). Angels were the one sort, Job 38:7; man the other, Luke 3:38; the one as well as the other created after his own image in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. The one were kept in the higher house, the other in the lower. But sin entering among them, many of the family died such a death as quite dissolved the relation betwixt God and them, that they could no more call him Father, nor could he own them for his children. It seized those first of the upper house, and multitudes of them (for in one man was a legion of them) dropt down to the pit, 2 Pet. 2:4. They infected those of the lower house, and they that received the infection from them, conveyed it to all the rest, so that death passed upon all that part of the family to a man, Rom. 5:12. So that here was an empty house made.

This evinces the suitableness of making up the family again, by the way of adoption, which by spiritual death received such a diminution. As also the suitableness of adoption from among men, which the fallen angels have no share in. For since they were not all to be recovered that had fallen, but the justice of God was to be glorified in some of them, it was agreeable to the wisdom of God to adopt men, not fallen angels, since the whole mankind was lost, but not the whole angelic kind. Multitudes of angels stood when the rest fell, but all mankind was lost together.

5. But what shall be done for the law that forbids the staining of the Adopter's honour by the meanness of the party adopted? This was a notable impediment in the way of this device of repairing the family. The Adopter can be no higher, for he is the Sovereign King of the world, the adopted no lower, for they are not only the children of base men, but of the devil, the most miserable creature in the

universe. No law could be more strict for the honour of the Adopter than the holy law of God is. And he would by no means overlook it, but magnify it, and make it honourable. What possibility then is there of God's adopting children of the devil in inconsistency with his honour?

Wisdom finds out the way, that is, that they shall be adopted in Jesus Christ, Eph. 1:5, 6. Gal. 3:26, 27. And to let you see that this way makes it consistent with the honour of God to adopt those that by nature are children of the devil, consider three things in the mystery of Christ.

(1.) By the incarnation of the Son of God, the human nature is dignified and nobilitated, raised to a pitch of honour even above that of the angels, Heb. 1:13. So the Son of God partaking of human nature with the elect, owns them as his brethren, by virtue of their common human nature, Heb. 2:11, 12. And for this very cause he did become man, ver. 14 which takes away the impediment arising from the meanness of the adopted, it being very agreeable to God's honour to adopt those for children who were of the same nature with his own Son, i. e. of human nature. For the Son of God, to make way for this adoption, took to himself a holy human nature, into personal union with his Godhead. Hence,

(2.) The man Christ is the Elder Brother in the repaired family of heaven, Rom. 8:29 the first of the human nature having interest in God as a Father, after the extinguishing of the first relation by creation. So that the elect drawing to him, as one betwixt whom and them there is a natural bond of the same human nature, way is made for their adoption through him, in consistency with the honour of God.

(3.) By his obedience and satisfaction he purchased their adoption, with all other privileges to them, Gal. 4:4, 5. And his natural bond with them gave him a direct interest to redeem them as being their near Kinsman. So law and justice can have nothing to object against

the adoption. Thus by Jesus Christ, the glorious device of repairing the family of heaven in the way of Adoption is made practicable. But how shall it be executed? Why,

6. Our Lord sends his messengers, ministers of the gospel, out into the world among those of Satan's family, to proclaim the offer of adoption unto them, that whosoever of them will leave their father's house and people, shall be adopted into the family of heaven. This is offered to them and it is pressed upon them by many arguments and intreaties to accept and come away. By their mouths the Lord cries to them, 2 Cor. 6:17, 18. 'Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.' Psal. 45:10. 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.' They expose the nakedness of their father's house to them. They tell them, that he is a cruel and deceitful father, John 8:44 that he treats them as slaves, not as sons, 2 Tim. 2 ult. that the entertainment of his house is wretched and beggarly, that they have nothing to eat but dust with the serpent, or husks with the swine; that their work is base, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and mind; the wages, death; and that he has no inheritance to give them but what will make them eternally miserable. On the other hand, they commend the family of heaven, the Father of the family, the entertainment, the work, wages, inheritance, &c.

Hereupon the father of the family rages, and stirs up the children against them and their message. Sometimes he raises the family against them, and all that take part with them, and they set upon them violently, and knock them down, and despitefully use them, by persecutions, &c. so that many have lost their lives in the cause, for presuming to disturb that family. When he cannot get that done, he teaches them to stop their ears, that, if they must speak, what they say shall not get access into their hearts, Psal. 58:4, 5. And thus the most part of the family get a deafness that abides with them, and

grows more and more to their dying day, and they are never cured of it.

7. But unto the elect among them God sends his Spirit, which opens their ears, awakens their conscience, and rouses them so, that they can no longer miss to hear, and understand too, what concerns themselves and both the families, Job 36:10. And then that makes deep impression on them, which the rest of the family do not at all regard; that makes them wake, while their brethren about them are fast asleep. They see the fire of heaven ready to fall upon the house, see through the murdering designs of their father; they see how they are entertained but with vain hopes, and deluded, in that upper house for a while, till he may get them conveyed into the lower house. And so they set off to come out from among them, and be separate, that they may be received into the family of heaven. But,

8. Then their natural father bestirs himself with all his might to stop their coming out from that family, and that separation. He will set their brethren on them, whereof some will try to mock them from it, others with serpentine wisdom gravely to advise them against the fancy; others which is most dangerous, to entangle them in the work and entertainment of their father's house. Himself will attack them with flatteries, spread out his baits and allurements of temptation, promise them peace, allow them an indulgence, not to be so hard put to it in his work as before, change their work from the coarser to the finer, represent the family of heaven in base colours, that there is no liberty there, but they are pent up to intolerable strictness, &c. But if that will not do, he will fall on them with rage, and tell them, that there is no room now in the family of heaven for them, that they have been too long among them to come out and be separate now; that they are his, and he will not part with them, and therefore they may give it over. And thus, by the flatteries or the rage, some are prevailed with to turn back again, and settle down again in their father's house, like Orphan returning to her gods, after she had set off from them, Ruth 1:15. But,

9. The Spirit of Christ presses forward the elect, and determines them to seek to be received into the family of God, John 6:45. He is to them a Spirit of light and faith; thereby they discover that there is some hope, concerning their case, that even they may be received into the family. So they that are effectually determined to leave their father's house, not to stay there, come of them what will, to come to the Lord and sue for reception, not to depart, if they should die at his door.

10. Hereupon the soul comes away to Christ, the elder brother of the family, and of our nature; and joins himself to him by faith, and is received, John 6:37 takes hold of the offer of the marriage-covenant, and consents to the spiritual marriage with him who is the Heir of all things, and the Son of God, and so becomes his by a marriage-tie, Cant. 2:16. The soul drawn by the Spirit to him whose name is the Branch, is put into that branch, being cut off from the natural stock, and knits therewith by faith. Thus the soul is united to Christ, justified, and reconciled to God, and set beyond the reach of the curse.

11. Lastly, Upon this follows the adoption of the believer, who new has received and is ingrafted into Christ, John 1:12. Being brought out of the state of condemnation by justification, he is further dignified by a reception as a member into the family of heaven.

(1.) The Lord Jesus presents unto the Father, the Adopter and Judge, the party to be adopted into his family, Heb. 2:13 as Joseph did Ephraim and Manasseh to Jacob. And he presents him for adoption, as one that, though by nature he be of a strange family, yet is now his own child by the spiritual birth, being born of his Spirit. As an elder brother, he presents the believer as his brother by common human nature; and as the head and husband, presents the soul as his spouse by marriage-covenant. He pleads his purchase of believers by the price of his blood, and their actual relation to him; and that therefore in fulfilment of his Father's decree, they be adopted by him, Eph. 1:5.

(2.) The natural father, the devil, upon the account of the purchase made of his child by Jesus Christ, and the child's lawful renouncing of his power and family, and coming unto Christ, is obliged to renounce and give up with him, as no member of his family any more, though sore against his will. If he appear in this judgment to defend his own interest, as Satan stood at Joshua's right hand to resist him, Zech. 3:1 the Mediator stops his mouth, as ver. 2. 'Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?'

(3.) Lastly, The Father of our Lord Jesus, for the sake of his Son, receives the believer into the number of his children, saying in effect, As the man Christ and the angel Gabriel, ye are mine, and shall be mine; and as a Judge, he adjudges the believer to be his child, and the relation betwixt him and his natural father extinguished, Isa. 49:24, 25 as having purchased them with the blood of his dear Son; and farther gives them a right to the privileges of his sons.

Thus is the glorious benefit brought about, by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and the elect soul adopted into the family of heaven. And this consists of two parts.

FIRST, The adopted are received into the number of the sons of God. God becomes a Father to them, and they his sons and daughters. His family consists of many children, each one for holiness and happiness illustrious; all resembling, what indeed they are, the children of a king. They are taken by adoption out of the black number of the devil's family, consisting of devils, damned spirits, and an unconverted world, bearing the devil's image. And they are taken into the blessed number of the sons of God, whereof his family consists. And who are they that make up that number?

1. Jesus Christ the Son of God by eternal generation, who has taken on our nature, and was declared the Son of God by his resurrection, Psal. 2:7. He is one of the number they are received into, and therefore is not ashamed to call them brethren, Heb. 2:7. And who can recount the dignity of being of that number, whereof he is one;

he who is the brightness of his Father's glory, the luminary of heaven, Rev. 21:22 whose splendour is greater than sun and moon? He is the chief of that number, the eldest brother, not only in respect of men, but of angels. To him belongs the dominion, priesthood, the blessing, and the double portion. And it is fit, that while we reckon him one of the number, we notice well his preeminence over all the rest, remembering the dignity of the eldest brother.

(1.) The dominion is his, the supremacy and royalty belongs unto him, and our Father has solemnly invested him therewith, Psal. 2:6. Though all his brethren are the children of the King, yet he alone is the heir of the crown. On this Lion of the tribe of Judah the kingdom is settled, and the sceptre is given him over all the glorious family of his brethren, who are in number as the sand of the sea, Col. 1:18. Him must all his brethren praise, to him must they bow down, Gen. 49:8. Heb. 1:6. The sceptre put into his hand shall never depart.

(2.) The priesthood is his. In him the crown and the mitre both meet together, Zech. 6:13. 'He shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne.' God hath given him an eternal and unchangeable priesthood, confirmed by an oath, Psal. 110:4. He hath offered his sacrifice, and gone into the holy of holies in heaven with the blood of atonement. He hath redeemed men and confirmed angels, being made their head, Eph. 1:10. Whatever sacrifices we have to offer, God saith of Christ to us, as of Job to his friends, 'Go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept,' chap. 42:8. For to him it belongs to offer for the family.

(3.) The blessing is his. Though all the children be blessed, yet the eldest brother had a peculiar blessing allotted to him above all the rest. Therefore said Isaac, 'Thy brother hath taken away thy blessing,' Gen. 27:35. So our Lord Christ hath received the peculiar blessing of his Father, Rom. 9:5. He is the fountain and storehouse of blessing to all the family. Others receive the blessing in the capacity of a vessel

to serve themselves, he in the capacity of a fountain, to shed abroad unto others. And they whom he blesses shall be blessed indeed.

(4.) Lastly, The double portion of our Father's goods is his, as that is understood, 2 Kings 2:9. The greatest fulness that ever any had was never comparable to him, who is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, Psal. 45:7. Whatever portion of the Spirit men or angels are partakers of, it is still by a certain measure; but God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him, John 3:34. For the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily, Col. 2:9. And accordingly his glory in heaven is without a parallel among his brethren, who shall all be glorious: but they receive and borrow their light from him, he gives it, Rev. 21:23.

2. Angels, the sons of God by creation, Job 38:7. They are of this number, and are an innumerable company of pure, and spotless, and glorious spirits, all sons of the house, with whom the adopted are fellow children of God, Heb. 12:22. The angelical nature in itself is far more honourable than man's, seeing they are pure spirits, not clogged with bodies, as we are; therefore says the Psalmist of man, 'Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, Psal. 8:5. And they have never been polluted with sin, as we are. Yet they own themselves the brethren of the adopted saints even in this life. Nay, they are content to be ministering spirits to them, even as the grown children of a family are employed to take care of the little children, their brothers and sisters, not capable to take care of themselves, Heb. 1 ult.

3. Lastly, The saints in heaven and earth, sons of God by regeneration and adoption, Eph. 3:15. The saints on earth are the excellent upon it, more excellent than their neighbours. And as soon as one is adopted of God, he has them all for brothers and sisters; and so there is a special love among them, as betwixt the children of one family, 1 John 3:14. Nay, they are in the same relation to the saints in heaven, and incorporated with them, Heb. 12:23. Though they are very far above us, yet we are children of God as well as they,

as the little ones are as truly of the family as the sons of perfect age; and as that part of the family that dwells in the lower rooms, as well as those that are advanced to the higher.

This is that glorious number the adopted are received into; with these they are counted. All these have one and the same Father, God, John 20:17; the same elder brother, Christ; and do all make up one family, whereof the elder brother is the head, whose head is God.

USE. Sue for this adoption, and for being received into this number; and for this cause come out from among the world lying in wickedness, and be ye separate. There is a feast before as made for the children. It is a sad token for people never to partake of the childrens' bread, but ever to stand at a distance as strangers to the family: and what concern can there be in the spirits of these for the privileges of God's invisible family, that have no concern for the privileges of his visible family on earth? On the other hand, it is dangerous to intrude among the children, while one is not of the family; to come in among the children of God at the Lord's table, while they are not come out from among the children of Satan.

This adoption is in your offer. Ye that are of the black number this day, may be received into this number so honourable and glorious. If ye believe these things, they cannot but move you to come away, and join yourselves to the household of God.

SECONDLY, They get a right to the privileges of the sons of God. These are great privileges, even agreeable to the dignity of the family they are taken into. I shall lay these before you, to move you to seek to partake of this benefit.

1. A new name, Rev. 2:17 and 3:12. God's name is put upon them; and what is that, but, as it is in the text, their old name is for ever laid aside: they are no more called children of the devil, but the sons and daughters of God. They are called of God sons and daughters, Heb. 12:5. Let the world call them what names of contempt they will, God

will call them by most endearing and honourable names, as his treasure, Exod. 19:5; his jewels, Mal. 3:17. See the whole Song of Solomon.

2. The Spirit of adoption, Rom. 8:15. That is the spirit of the family of heaven, a noble and generous spirit, a spirit of love to God, and confidence in him as a Father. Hereby they are enabled to call God Father, and that is more worth than a thousand worlds. The rest of the world call him Lord, the hypocrite Master; but the believer may call him Father, at all times, in all the changes of his dispensations; for Abba is a word that, read it backward or forward, is still the same. He disowns others' pretences to this, John 8:41, 44; but he presses it on and teaches it his own, Jer. 3:4. 'Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father?'

3. Access to God and communion with him. They may come farther in than others, come forward with holy boldness, when others must stand back, Eph. 3:12. God as a Father is familiar with his children, allows them a holy confidence with him, as children to pour their complaints into his bosom, and tell him all their wants. And never did a father take so much delight in his child's talking to him, as God, in the prayers of his people poured out, by virtue of the Spirit of adoption, Prov. 15:8. Cant. 2:14.

4. Special immunities and freedoms. King's children have great immunities, Matth. 17:26 but God's children the greatest of all. While others are condemned men, slaves, servants at best; the children are free. They are freed from the law as a covenant of works, the yoke wreathed about all others' necks. Others must work for their living, and must die, if they cannot gain life thereby: but their life is given them without it, as children. They are free from the curse, which is clapt on others, upon every breach of the law, Gal. 3:10; but their breaches may bring on them a cross, but by no means a curse, ver. 13. They are free from the hurt of every thing in the issue, Luke 10:19; while others are liable to be worsted by the best things, they

shall not be so, Rom. 8:35, 38, 39; but bettered by the worst things that befall them, ver. 28.

5. God's fatherly love and pity. The little children, while in this world are liable to many infirmities, and he distinguishes their weakness from wickedness and pities them, Psal. 103:13. And the elder brother is touched with a feeling of them, Heb. 4:15. No bowels are so tender and lasting as God's towards his children; no mother so tender of the fruit of her womb as God is of his children, Isa. 49:15. When he corrects them, he does it with a fatherly reluctance, Lam. 3:33. When he gives them a frown or a rough word, his bowels yearn towards them, and their relentings go near his heart, Jer. 30:20. His anger is soon over, in comparison of the cloud of wrath that abides on others, though they are ready to look on it as a kind of eternity; but his returning mercies are lasting, Isa. 54:8. And from this pity many times he spares them, when otherwise they would heavily smart, Mal. 3:17.

6. Protection, Prov. 14:26. They are in danger while they are here, from the devil, the world and the flesh; in danger by temptations to sin, by calamities; but God sets a hedge about them, which neither devils nor their agents can break over, but as he opens a gap by his permission for their trial, Job 1:10. In all cases they have a Father to run to, both able and willing to protect them, Psal. 90:1. When they fall into the hand of their enemies, they are mercifully delivered, and never left with them, Psal. 37:14. And at length he will set them beyond all danger, Rev. 21:25.

7. Provision, 1 Pet. 5:7. He provides for their souls, Psalm 84:11. And since he is the God of the whole man, he provides for their bodies too, both food and raiment, Isa. 33:16. Matth. 6:30, 32. Come what will, God's children shall be provided for; for he that feeds his birds, the ravens that cry, will not starve his children. Though he will not make provision for their lusts, he will make provision for their necessities, Psal. 37:3.

8. Seasonable and sanctified correction. What is a proper punishment and a sign of wrath on others, is a privilege to them, Heb. 12:6. It is a special benefit of the covenant of grace, proceeding from God's fatherly love, Psal. 89:30–32. Some smart more for a whorish look after an idol, than others for giving themselves a full swing in their evil way; some more for deadness and indisposition in prayer, than others for neglecting it altogether, &c. For a small fault in a child whose education the father has a peculiar concern for, will be more severely checked than a greater in a stranger.

9. Lastly, An inheritance and portion, according to their Father's quality. They are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, Rom. 8:17. So all is theirs, grace and glory. Their portion will never fail, but tell out through eternity, when the portion of worldly men shall be at an end, 1 Pet. 1:4. Their Father gives them of his moveables, as he sees meet; but their inheritance is not moveable, Heb. 12:28.

THIRDLY, The next thing is to shew the properties of this adoption.

1. It is a precious and costly relation. There was a price, a great one, paid to instate the sinner in this privilege. What the chief captain said to Paul in another case, 'With a great sum obtained I this freedom,' Acts 22:28 a child of God may say concerning himself, though he paid not that sum himself, Gal. 4:4, 5. The Son of God, Christ, bought them by his obedience and death. That is the price of our adoption.

2. It is a high and honourable one, John 1:12. As low as we naturally are, adopting grace raiseth us to the highest pitch of honour we are capable of; to be brethren of angels, yea, of Christ, and the children of God. 'Seemeth it a small thing to you to be son-in-law to the king?' said David; but how much more to be the sons and daughters of the King of heaven.

3. It is freely bestowed, Eph. 1:5. There is nothing in the adopted naturally, more than in the rest of their natural father's house, to

move God to pitch on them rather than others, so that it is free grace merely that makes the difference. Neither birth, nor beauty, nor parts, can be here alleged, Ezek. 16. Neither was it from indigence, as among men, that God adopted any of the children of men, but from his own bountiful nature: not to bring any additional pleasure or comfort to himself, for he needs none, but to make them partakers of his goodness.

4. Lastly, It is a never-failing relation. Once a child of God, ever so, 1 John 8:35. If a child wander from his father's house, he will be sought and brought back again; so the children of God shall persevere in the state of grace. A servant of the house of heaven may be turned out of doors, and quite leave their master, 2 Pet. 2:1 yea, a natural son may also perish or be lost. So Adam was turned out, so the fallen angels never recovered. But God's adopted children can never fall totally away, Psal. 89:30–34.

USE 1. Of information. Is adoption into God's family the peculiar privilege of those that are effectually called? Then,

1. The gospel-calling is the highest calling men are capable of, Phil. 3:14. It calls men to the dignity of the sons of God. And they that undervalue it shew themselves sons of earth, that know not the things of God. It might draw tears of pity from the eyes God has enlightened, to think how the gospel-call is slighted, as idle tales, how men value themselves on trifles and baubles of this world, and think the compliance with the gospel-call a vain thing: and all this by men whose eyes the god of this world has blinded, 2 Cor. 4:3, 4 who trample on the pearl, because they know not the value of it.

2. The unconverted man is of Satan's family still, a child of the devil, for he is not adopted into God's family, John 8:44. Many a gospel-call has sounded in your ears, sinner, hast thou not come away on the call? then thou art yet a child of the devil, Acts 13:10 and therefore an heir of hell and of wrath. Perhaps thou wilt not believe this, and never couldst: but that is agreeable enough to the blindness

of the children of the family of darkness, Rev. 3:17. Whose image dost thou bear? Holiness is God's image, unholiness the devil's. Thy dark heart and unholy life plainly tell the family thou art of.

3. The unconverted man has no right before the Lord to sit down at the Lord's table. It is children's bread, and not to be cast to the dogs, Matt. 15:26. It is true, men that make a credible profession of their repentance have a right before the church; for of the heart in that case men cannot judge. But a token from an angel will not bear out a child of the devil, at God's table before the Lord. God makes this feast for his children; and if God had not children to feed here, it would not be prepared: but wo to those that come in among them, not having sincerely forsaken their natural father's house, and their own people. Will he welcome the children of his grand enemy among his own? No surely. Therefore first comply with the gospel-call, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate.' Come to Christ, that ye may be entered into God's family by adoption, and then come to his table.

4. Compliance with the gospel-call brings with it a right to the table of the Lord. This do, and ye shall be adopted into his family, and have a right to the privileges thereof. This answers the question, How may we be fitted for the Lord's table? The gospel calls you to come away, forget your own people, and your father's house, the entertainment, work, and business thereof. Give up with all your lusts and idols, receive Christ for your Prophet, Priest, and King; enter into the covenant sincerely. And Christ's Father shall be your Father, and then ye shall be fitted to come to his table, and have the children's portion.

5. A true Christian is more excellent than his neighbour, Prov. 12:26. A godly man is more preferable to a wicked man, than a king's son is to the son of a slave, though in external things the latter may have the pre-eminence. A saint in rags is a child of God, while the wicked laded with honours and wealth is a child of the devil. The former has privileges as far above those of the other, as the heavens are above

the earth. O! if this were believed, people would more eagerly pursue after grace than gold, and seek the state of grace more than all the world can afford.

6. See hence the spring of the hatred of the world against the people of God, that has vented itself in all the abuses they have met with from the wicked. They are of opposite families, that will never agree, John 15:19. Hence it is that the love of the brethren is made a sign of a child of God, 1 John 3:14. And to be haters and despisers of them, is a black mark. But look abroad through the world, and ye will see, that if there be persons who hate to be restrained, but can take a latitude to themselves, these are the men. But as for others that dare not go into the same excess of riot, who tremble at the Lord's word, and carry at a distance from the appearance of evil, these are ready to be maligned, mocked, and despised, as men of no spirit, because not of the spirit of the devil's family. Nay, not only is the world's contempt and spite against the children, but against the very servants, whom the world despise oft-times for no other reason, but because they are servants, and concerned in the church, which is God's family on earth. Unlike the disposition of God's children, Psal. 84:10 who say, 'A day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.'

7. Lastly, The people of God are brethren, and should live together in peace and unity and love, as brethren. O how unnatural are the jarrings and discords among those that profess to be of the same family of heaven! Our heavenly Father setting his children on their way home together, says, as Joseph said to his brethren, 'See that ye fall not out by the way,' Gen. 45:24. Lay by all feuds and discords among yourselves, forgive as ye would be forgiven. And especially I warn all against approaching to the table of the Lord, in the leaven of bitterness, malice, and revenge, keeping up their quarrels. It is a feast for the children of the family, sealing our communion with one another; a seal of the pardon of sin, and reconciliation with God, which we cannot have unless we forgive others from the heart, Mat.

6:15. Therefore remember, that 'if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift,' chap. 5:23, 24.

USE II. Try whether ye be the children of God, adopted into God's family or not. To quicken you hereto, consider,

Mot. 1. Ye were born children of the devil's family; he was your natural father, and there is no middle state betwixt the two families. Still ye belong either to the one or the other. Does it not concern you then to search which of the two ye are now of; whether ye be come out from among them, or are still living with them, among whom ye were born?

2. This matter is of the strictest weight. Upon the one hand, are the most excellent privileges which it is sad to lose; and on the other, the most dreadful disadvantages, which it is terrible to lie under. They differ as heaven and hell; and indeed your eternal state turns upon this point. If ye be children of God, heaven shall be your mansion; if not, hell your everlasting abode.

3. Many deceive themselves in this point. They call God Father, whom he will never own for his children, John 8:41, 44. They look for the privileges of his children, who will be disowned, as children of Satan. And O what a terrible surprise will that be, to be cast down from the highest hopes to the lowest pitch of despair!

4. Lastly, This trial is at all times necessary, but especially on occasion of the sacrament, 1 Cor. 11:28. 'Wherefore let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup To clear this, is to clear your right to that holy ordinance. The children whom God has taken into his family by adoption, he has prepared that table for, and for none else. Others are debarred as none of his family, but of the family of Satan. They are bid welcome

as his own children, for whose nourishment, growth, and comfort, he has prepared it. Ye may know this by the following marks.

Mark 1. The image ye bear. Children are like their father, and all God's children father themselves. I allude to Judges 8:18. They each one resemble the children of a king. Look to thy own soul, and say as Christ of the tribute-money, 'Whose image and superscription is this?' The image of God may shine more brightly in one than another, in one person at one time more than another; but his image is on all his children, 2 Cor. 3:18. If thou bearest his image, thou wilt be like him.

1. In the head, for there will be spiritual and saving knowledge, Col. 3:10. He is 'the Father of lights,' and his children are 'children of light,' Eph. 5:8. Ye that are yet living in your natural darkness, with whom there has been no morning to put an end to the darkness of a natural state, are yet of the family of Satan; and particularly grossly ignorant ones are so, Isa. 27:11. For though some of God's children may not be book-learned, they are all Spirit-learned, John 6:45. But if God has enlightened your darkness and ye are renewed in knowledge, it is a good sign if ye are let into the knowledge of God and spiritual things, by the working of the Spirit of the Lord on you.

It is true, there is a false light, and a vain knowledge of spiritual things, even in the devil's family; but saving knowledge is, (1.) Solid and humbling, Job 42:5, 6; and the more a man has of it, he is the more vile in his own eyes: the other is airy and windy, 1 Cor. 8:1. Knowledge puffeth up, and makes a man think himself something, when he is nothing. (2.) Lively and sanctifying, John 13:17. When the Spirit came on the primitive Church, Acts 2:3 there appeared tongues like fire: so true knowledge has a heat with it, to burn up known sin, and to burn toward known duty. They know and desire to know, in order to practise. The other is a sort of wild fire, that has light with it, but no heat; meet enough to lead people to the pit, where there is a burning heat but no light, 1 Cor. 8:1. Unholy ministers and professors, that have knowledge, they are like gentlemen skilled in

architecture; all the use they have for it, is to tell how a house should be built, and draw the draughts, but they never lay a stone. The child of God is like the mason that learns the trade, to the end he may work in it daily. The former may have more of the theory than the latter, and can talk more rationally about it; but they are not called masons: the latter have more of the practice, so the name is theirs. Even so in spirituals, men not enlightened in the knowledge of God, so as to practise it in works of holiness, are not called of God Christians. (3.) Lastly, Experimental and savoury, Phil. 3:9. The child of God feels the power of truth on his soul. He sees the glory of Christ and religion, and he loves them, and is touched with the overcoming beauty. He feels the ill of sin, and he is put in horror with the deformity of it, 1 Peter 2:3. The other is speculative, unfelt untried, 1 Cor. 13:1–3. They speak of religion as a parrot, without the sense or knowledge of the things themselves, as a man does of war that was never at a battle, or one of sweet spices that he never saw, 1 Tim. 1:7.

2. In heart. Children readily partake of the disposition of their parents; so that as they are like them in the face, they are like them in their manners too. The child of God gets a new heart, Ezek. 36:26. So righteousness and holiness are parts of the image of God, Eph. 4:24. Every child of God is in some measure like David, a man after God's own heart. The heart that was bent to evil, gets a set to the right side; the heart that was enmity against God, is turned to him. So that the soul loves what God loves, hates what he hates, sorrows for what grieves his Spirit, rejoices in what is acceptable to him. These are the upright and pure in heart in a gospel sense, Matth. 5:8.

But some will say, Well, I keep always a good heart to God. Others, Alas! the heart is the worst bit in me, where I can see the least likeness to God. Ans. Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first. The heart is both the best and worst bit in man. The best, Prov. 4:23; the worst, Jer. 17:9. And therefore I conclude, that the former sort are none of the children of God, because they are blind, and mistake the worst part of them for the best, the chambers of imagery for the temple of God, Rev. 3:17. Prov. 30:12. The latter

sort may be God's children; for that which makes the heart to be both the best and worst part, is, that in every heart of God's family on earth, there is a renewed part, the spirit; and an unrenewed part, the flesh, Gal. 5:17; the one the best part, the other the worst. So that this holds of the children of God; for the best part of an unrenewed man is his life, be it never so bad, his heart is always worse, as the fountain is worse than the stream, Mark 7:21. Now, the child of God, looking on the unrenewed part of the heart, sees the worst bit in him: but if he look to the renewed part, it is the best for all that, better than his life, Psal. 45:13; be it never so good, Matth. 26:41.

The heart of a child of God is a roomy house; and grace and corruption in that heart are like two flitters, one going out of the house, the other coming into it. The outgoing tenant is loath to leave the house, makes no speed to lift his plenishing, but as the incomer lifts it for him to make room for his own. So here lies the one's furniture, there the other's in and about the same house. Even so God's good things that he has in a saint, and the devil's evil things that he has in him, are both to be found in the house of the heart, and standing about the door in the life. In the heart of a child of God, upon the one hand lies God's plenishing, faith, humility, meekness, &c. on the other, Satan's, unbelief, pride, passion, &c.; with this difference, that the latter is nearest the door, and all lifted out of their place, which they sometimes stood in, when they had the house there alone.

But what the differencing mark here of a heart on which God's likeness is, is, that the law of God is written on that heart, Heb. 8:10. This is the peculiar privilege of a child of God. And it speaks three things.

(1.) A heart-approbation of the law. The law of God is holy and pure, condemning all impurity wherever it is found. But a child of God heartily approves of it, even though it strike against his most beloved idols. He approves of it in his judgment, as Just and righteous; and not only so, but in his practical judgment, as good as well as just,

Rom. 7:12; which evidences the natural enmity to be broken, and the heart new moulded, Rom. 8:7.

(2.) A heart-inclination to the holy law. There is a principle within the man lying the same way with the law, and bending towards what it directs to, and away from what it forbids, Rom. 7:22. And though there be a contrary principle to this, which thwarts and crosses it, yet the child of God takes part with the former against the latter, and is striving and longing to be rid of it, Rom. 7:24. This is the new set of the heart, given in the new birth, consisting not in bare wishes to be conformed to that law, but in a resolute bent of the heart for it, which will never leave its struggling, till it overcome at last. And,

(3.) An universality in both, Psal. 119:6. It is not some shreds and pieces of the law that the heart approves of and inclines to, but the whole law, in every part thereof to them known, ver. 128. The holy law in all the parts thereof is a copy of the holy divine nature, and it is transcribed into the heart of the child of God, in so far as there are gracious inclinations wrought in the soul answerable to the several points of the law, as the wax bears the impress of the seal, John 1:16. So that try the child of God in his weakest side, this approbation and inclination will be found, Psal. 18:23.

3. In their walk, Eph. 5:1. As children follow their father's footsteps, the children of God follow their heavenly Father. We have had the way of our Father, God, chalked out to us in the way our Lord took, and we must prove our sonship by following his steps, 1 John 2:6. He walked in the way of humility, meekness, self-denial, and heavenly-mindedness; and if we be following his steps in sincerity, conscientiously aiming at these things, it is an evidence we are the children of God.

Particularly, the way of love to men was a notable road of his, which we must follow, Eph. 5:2. A spirit of bitterness, fieryness. and selfishness, whatever men profess, is a black mark, it is so very unlike Christ's way. And although the loving and seeking the good of

our friends is so very rare in the world, and people generally hesitate not to return evil for evil, nay, many times working mischief to them that never wronged them; yet the loving of our enemies, as Christ loved his, and doing them good as we have opportunity, is absolutely necessary to evidence us to be the children of God, Matth. 5:44, 45.

Mark 2. By your affections to the family of God. A child of God has child-like affections to the family of heaven. Nature teaches us a special affection to our relations; and the new nature and state teaches the same to the heavenly family, betwixt whom there is a spiritual bond. Try the pulse of your affections, thereby to see your state.

1. A child of God has a child-like love and affection to God as his Father, and to Christ as his Elder Brother. This is a sure mark, 1 John 4:19. They bear a superlative, transcendent love to God and Christ, loving him above all persons, and all things. He is dearer to them than lawful or unlawful enjoyments, Psalm 73:25. And this love will manifest itself.

(1.) In honouring him as a father, Mal. 1:6. A child of God has an honour for him, which the rest of the world have not. He sees a glory, loveliness, and majesty in him above all other, 1 Pet. 2:7 which produces a love mixed with reverence, that makes up the child-like disposition.—These are separated in others. The presumptuous hypocrite seems to have a love to him, but they want reverence, and their pretended familiarity breeds contempt. The unrenewed heart, under convictions of sin and duty, has a slavish fear of him, but no love to him. But the child of God has love mixed with reverence.

(2.) A conscientious obedience to his commands, 1 John 5:3. The father's command is a sufficient bond of obedience on a kindly child; and so is God's on those that are his.—It is lamentable to think of the horrid untenderness and woful latitude that many take to themselves, whose conscience can witness, that God's command, though known, has not the weight of a feather on their consciences,

in many things; especially where their own interest is concerned, or in things that are thought light of by the world. But a child of God has weighty thoughts of God's authority, smiles, and frowns, and will rather venture the displeasing of any than his Father.

(3.) In submitting to his chastisements, Micah 7:9. 'I bear the indignation of the Lord,' says the prophet, 'because I have sinned against him.' It is the disposition of a child of God, to justify God under the rebukes of providence, to condemn himself, and turn to the hand that smiteth.

(4.) In his absence from them, and displeasure against them, it is the disposition of a child of God, (1.) To take his absence heavily; so the spouse is heart-sick when her beloved is gone, a thing that many are very little acquainted with, Cant. 5:8. (2.) To justify him in his withdrawals; the soul leaves its complaint on itself, Psal. 22:1, 3. (3.) To long for his return and countenance, with a holy impatience, as Sisera's mother, Judges 5:28. 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?' Psal. 63:1. 'O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.' (4.) To take rest in nothing while he hides his face. Worldly comforts, yea, gospel-ordinances, are sapless without him. Still they say with Job, 'O that I knew where I might find him!' Job 23:3. Lastly, To use all endeavours to find him, as the spouse did, Cant. 5.

(5.) Lastly, In his presence with them, and the outlettings of himself to them. (1.) To be well content in the enjoyment of himself instead of all things, Psal. 4:6, 7. (2.) To be inflamed with love to him, Luke 24:32. (3.) To be desiring more and more of his presence, Cant. 8:6. (4.) To like well the full enjoyment in heaven, Phil. 1:23. (5.) To be loath to part, Cant. 3:5.

And to clear yet more this mark of love to God,

[1.] It is love to God for himself; not only for what he has to give us, as the hypocrite's servile love is; but also for what he is in himself, Psal. 45:2. 'Thou art fairer than the sons of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever, Psal. 73:25. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee.' They love him in all his perfections, particularly for his holiness and spotless purity, Psal. 97:12. 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.'

[2.] They love what is his for his sake. His stamp and image on any thing makes it lovely to them, Psal. 26:8. 'Lord,' says David, 'I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.' Hence they love his truths, ordinances, and people. Which brings to a second particular.

2. He has a love to the brethren of the family, 1 John 3:14. For clearing this mark, consider,

(1.) It is a love to them as such, for the image of God appearing in them. When we love the godly for their godliness, the saints for their sanctity, we love God in them, and so may conclude, 'that every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him,' 1 John 5:1. Hypocrites may love saints, because of natural relation to them, their obliging conversation, their being of their way or opinion, and the like: but happy those who love them for naked grace in them, that pick the pearl out of the dunghill of many unpleasing things about them, and kindly love them for that.

(2.) It is an universal love, to all the saints, Eph. 1:15. A child of God will love all who to his discerning bear God's image: not only the saints in gay clothing, but going in rags; not only those that are of our way, but of whatever party they be, if they agree with him in bearing God's image.

(3.) Lastly, The more grace any have, they will have the more of the love of the child of God. The more like our heavenly Father, the more

we will love them, since that likeness is the cause of the love.

Mark ult. By your spirit. A child of God has the spirit of the family of heaven; the Spirit of adoption, Rom. 8:15. Now, the Spirit of adoption is,

1. A Spirit of prayer, ib. This casts all prayerless persons that are come to years of discretion, as none of God's children. As it also casts all those, who, though they have a gift of prayer, and use it too, yet are strangers to the spirit of prayer. Now, the spirit of prayer makes spiritual worship, John 4:24; that is, by the Spirit he is helped to praying affections, seeking the enjoyment of God himself in the duty, and has his love, faith, humility, dependence on the Lord's word through Christ, his sense of wants, sincere desire of supply, &c. stirred up in him by the Spirit, Rom. 8:6.

2. A spirit of liberty, not of bondage, ib. The Spirit of adoption carries a man out from the influence of the covenant of works, so that he does not serve God as a slave, merely or mainly for fear of punishment, or hope of reward; but as a son does a father, out of love.

3. Lastly, A noble spirit, that raiseth a man's thoughts, aims, and designs, beyond the little mean things of this world; making him resolute for the enjoyment of God at any rate, and the land that is afar off, Num. 14:24. Those that are of noble families scorn to pursue the mean designs of the inferior sort, having a spirit suitable to their quality.—None are of such a noble extract as the saints are, by their new state: and their spirit is in some measure agreeable thereto.

II. I proceed to the second branch of the doctrine, which is, 'Whosoever will comply with the gospel-call, shall be adopted into God's family. God will be their Father, and they shall be his sons and daughters.'

Here I shall shew,

1. What is the call of the gospel, on compliance with which men shall be adopted into God's family.
2. Confirm the doctrine.
3. Lay before you further the nature of this relation to the family of heaven.
4. Apply the subject.

FIRST, I shall show what is the call of the gospel, on compliance with which we shall be adopted into the family of God. It consists of two parts. It is a call,

1. To leave the devil's family: 'Come out from among them,' Psal. 45:10. Come away from the family ye were born in: leave your natural father, his house, work, and way. Sinners, ye have remained too long at home. Repent now, and be converted. Give up with your old way of sin and sloth: bestir yourselves like true Israelites, and come forth from the land of Egypt, and the house of bondage, from the iron furnace. This is the gospel-call to you.

2. To come away to Jesus Christ, the head of the blessed society, and so put yourselves into the family of heaven, Matth. 11:28. 1 Pet. 2:4. A father, a master, ye must have; and ye are called to change fathers and masters, to take the Lord himself instead of Satan. Join yourselves to the Lord in the covenant of grace. Offer yourselves into the family of heaven, and for that cause accept the offer of the elder brother of that family, taking him for your all, in all his offices. He is saying to you as he did to the spouse, Cant, 4:8. 'Come with me from Lebanon,' &c. He offers to introduce you into his father's house and family, and to get you admitted among the children.

SECONDLY, I shall confirm this doctrine, 'That whosoever will comply with the gospel-call, shall be adopted into God's family.'

1. This is the plain gospel-promise, held out to sinners to engage them to come away, as in the text expressly. It is the Lord's own word, who is truth itself, and whose deeds of mercy and grace are always equal to his word; and ye may with all security venture on it. And it is no more than what was prophesied before to be the effect of the preaching of the gospel, among those that comply with it, Hos. 1:10.—'Ye are the sons of the living God.'

2. All that have complied, and come away, have met with no worse entertainment, than the promise put them in hope of, John 1:12. 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.' They were of sundry sorts that received him, some high, some low, some of the greatest sinners, that were grown sinners in the devil's family. But they all met with this entertainment. The apostle John, 1 Epist. 3:1 speaks of this honour as common to all that have believed. And the entertainment they have got before us, was designed for the encouraging of those in after generations to come away, Eph. 2:7.

3. This was the very end and design of the incarnation of the Son of God, his obedience, death, and sufferings, to bring in sinners as children into his Father's family, John 11:51, 52. The repairing of the breach made therein by the fall of angels and men, was laid upon him, as the fittest person: forasmuch as he was by nature the Son of God, he was the fittest to make others sons by grace. Hence he is represented,

(1.) As the first born among many brethren, a first-born in a positive sense, whom other sons were to follow, Rom. 8:29. The man Christ was designed to be God's first-born; and therefore there must of necessity be other men to be his brethren, as children of the same family. Else where is his pre-eminence, dominion, priesthood, &c. if there be no brethren added to him? Now these must be of men taken out of the devil's family, or not at all; for there are none other of Adam's posterity, whose nature he took.

(2.) As a Captain upon the head of the children bringing them home to their Father's house, Heb. 2:10. The glory the saints receive at last, is given them as children and heirs, Matth. 25:34. And Christ is appointed the Captain of those heirs of glory, leading them to their inheritance. Now, these must draw to his standard out of Satan's family, and list themselves under his banner, his army being gathered together by the gospel.

(3.) As one lowering himself to exalt our nature, that we might be capable of adoption into his Father's family, Heb. 2:14. For this cause he took our nature into personal union with his divine nature, that the meanness of the adopted might not be such as to stain the honour of the Adopter.—And now, since the Son of God is also the Son of man, the way is opened for the children of men to become the children of God.

(4.) Lastly, As travailing and bringing forth children unto God. Christ's death-pains were birth-pangs, Acts 2:24.—Well may he call believers Benoni and Nahptali; for his pangs for bringing forth these children put him to strong crying and tears, Heb. 5:7; into an agony and bloody sweat, Luke 22:44; and in the end he died of them. But only they were not in vain, he will have issue by all his labour and toil, as that word signifies, Isa. 53:11. 'He shall see of the travail of his soul.'

What ground then remains to doubt of this adoption, which Christ has been so employed for, and upon which so much of his honour depends?

4. The design of the ministry of the gospel is to bring sinners out of Satan's family into God's by adoption. And therefore they are sent out with that message in the name of the Lord, 2 Cor. 6:17. 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.' They are sent to travel betwixt the two families, and persuade sinners to forget their father's house. The Lord does not send out his ambassadors to

mock you, but as really as the word of God is truth, if ye comply with their call, ye shall be God's sons and daughters.

5. Lastly, Whosoever shall comply with the gospel-call shall be espoused and married to Christ, and therefore cannot miss to be a child of his Father's family, Hos. 2:19. The gospel-call is the carrying on a treaty betwixt the elder brother of the house of heaven and a child of the house of hell. It is offered to all to whom the gospel comes, and to you in particular, amongst whom the feast of the espousals is providing, Matth. 22:4. It is his Father's good will that this match be made. And therefore whom Christ takes for his spouse, the Father will never refuse for a child of his family.

THIRDLY, I will lay before you farther the nature of this relation unto the family of heaven. The text tells us, that the issue of this adoption is, that God will be a Father to the adopted, and they his children. Now, this may be considered in two respects. (1.) In point of privilege, and this privilege is exceedingly great; but of that we have spoken already. (2.) In point of duty, which the privilege brings along with it; and that I will now lay before you. If ye mind to join yourselves to the family of heaven, remember ye are to be there under the character of sons and daughters of the house, and must resolve to carry yourselves as such; otherwise ye do but mock God, and will ruin your own souls. Lay then your account with this, that God must be a Father to you, and ye his sons and daughters. And this in point of duty implies,

1. Ye must join interests with God's family. As the father's interest is the interest of all the children, so God's interest must be yours, on all hazards, Matth. 16:24. 'If any man will come after me (says Christ), let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' There is a continued battle betwixt Christ and his angels, and the devil and his; the peace will never be made. Now chuse what side you will fall in with. Christ is carrying all the family of God on earth away to heaven, in the ship of the covenant, with a design to weather all the storms they may meet with by the way; never to yield to go back to the

devil's ground. Are ye content to embark with him on these terms? If so, then say now as Ruth did to Naomi, Ruth 1:16. 'Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.' If not, better not to put your hand to the plough, than to look back.

2. God must command, and ye must obey without disputing your Father's orders. God says to children, 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right,' Eph. 6:1. 'Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord,' Col. 3:20. The same are the laws of the family of heaven, 1 Pet. 1:14. 'As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance.' If ye will come in here, leave your own corrupt will behind you, for your Father's will must be yours, Psal. 45:10 and ye must resolve to submit to all the laws of the house. If there be therefore any known duty ye have no mind to comply with, or known sin ye have no mind to part with, venture not in among the children, for ye cannot have the portion or welcome of a child.

3. Ye must give him internal as well as external obedience. Filial affections are due to a father; love, reverence, delight in him, and fear to offend him, Rom. 8:15. A slave or servant will give God the hand, when they do not give him the heart. But if thou be a son, thou must have child-like affections towards him. If thou hast no heart for him, no kindly zeal and concern on thy spirit to please him, thou canst be no child of his. And if thou dost not mind to ply internal as well as external obedience, thou art not for that family.

4. Ye must resolve to imitate your Father, Eph. 5:1. 'Be followers of God, as dear children.' Conform yourselves no more to the world, to follow the way of the multitude, Rom. 12:2 but set yourselves to write after Christ's copy, to follow his example, and to 'walk as he walked,' 1 John 2:6 for 'he has left us an example that we should follow his steps.' Consider if ye be so minded, ye are welcome to the children's table; if not, ye are not fit to come there.

5. Ye and your lot must be at God's disposal, Psal. 47:4. Ye must take what place, and act what part, in the family the Father shall think meet to dispose of you to. The soul that comes to Christ lays his all down at the Lord's feet, Acts 9:6; and if ye mind to come into the family, lay your account with this; for God will not allow his children to carve for themselves, but leave that to him.

6. Ye must submit to correction, Heb. 12:6, 7. The discipline of the house they must submit to who will come into it. The cross ye must be content to take up, if ever ye mind to put on the crown. Lay your account with the ilk-day's cross, and the holy-day's cross: for all the children of God are brought up under it. And they that will refuse the cross, will refuse their part in the family of heaven, since there is no part there without it.

7. Lastly, Ye must resolve to persevere to the end, John 8:35. Ye must take an everlasting farewell of Satan's family, never to go back to your former lusts and idols; but to be the Lord's only, wholly, and for evermore. Never enter the threshold of the house unless ye mind to stay for ever. Be contented to have your ears nailed to the door-posts; for God has said, 'If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him,' Heb. 10:38.

Use, Of exhortation. Comply with the gospel-call. Come to Christ out from among them, and partake of this adoption into God's family. Now ye may have God to be your Father, and ye may be his children. Secure this blessed bargain for yourselves now; and put a close to that transaction by sincerely closing with Christ, and giving up yourselves wholly to be the Lord's. I offer the following motives.

Mot. 1. Consider the wretched case of the family thou art of. Whilst thou art not a child of God, thou art a member of Satan's family, John 8:44; and they are a miserable society. They are miserable now, and will be miserable for evermore; for God has sworn that he will have war with them for ever. See the great stroke that will be the decisive one. Matth. 25:41. 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into

everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' Every unconverted man and woman is a child of wrath; that is their heritage from the Lord, which will make judgment their food, and everlasting sorrow their bed. None of them have a garment to cover their nakedness, nor wherewith to pay their debt to divine justice, so wretchedly poor are they; and therefore Christ says, 'Buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear,' Rev. 3:18.

Mot. 2. Consider what a Father God will be to you, the best of fathers. No children are so happy as God's children are.

1. The most honourable Father; he is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. And there are none whose eyes God has opened, but they will value this adoption more than all the fading honours of a world, 1 John 3:1. Moses preferred it to being the son of Pharaoh's daughter, Heb. 11:24, 25.

2. The most loving and compassionate Father. It goes beyond the love of fathers and mothers too to their sucking children, Isa. 49:15, 16. 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me.' What father's love would have made him to do what he has done for his children, even when they were enemies? John 3:16. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

3. The most helpful Father, he is able to help in all cases that his children can be in. Are they pursued? he has a refuge for them. Whatever they want, he can give them, for all is his. And if they be held at short commons at any time, it is because he sees it is best for them. When death comes, and neither father nor mother can help, he

can; as Psalm 48 ult. 'For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.'

4. The richest Father, that has the best inheritance to give to his children, 'an inheritance incorrupted and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,' 1 Pet. 1:4. He has prepared for them a better country, a glorious city, a palace for their mansion-place; richest treasures of glory. And all these are such as shall never go from them, nor they from them.

5. The wisest Father, 'God only wise.' He is one to whose disposal one may securely resign himself absolutely. He cannot be mistaken in his measures for his children's welfare; and he ever seeks it.

6. Lastly, His children have the best attendants, in their life, Heb. 1 ult. 'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation?' and at their death, angels to convoy them to Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:22. Yea, himself is ever with them in life and in death, till he bring them where they shall be beyond hazard, Psal. 23:4. 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.'

Mot. 3. Consider the mighty price paid for the redemption of sinners, to make way for them into God's family, Gal. 4:4, 5. 'When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' There was no hope of this till the Son of God undertook the work of redemption. And by his precious blood he purchased it for us. O! trample not on the price and purchase of blood.

Mot. 4. Consider what a wonderful thing it is, that there is a possibility of it, that children of Satan may become the children of God. Whoso considers their own vileness and God's greatness, must cry out with wonder, 'Is this the manner of men!'

Mot. ult. It is this day in your offer. The Lord says to you, even to all of you, as in the text, I will be a Father unto you, &c. And ye may have it, and have it sealed to you. But it will not always be so. The day of grace will come to an end.

Case 1. But will ever God set such a sinful and vile wretch as me among his children? Ans. Yes, if ye make not yourselves more vile, by rejecting Jesus Christ. I know nothing can hinder you from adoption, but that, John 3:19. 'And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.' The greatness of your sin will not do it, Isa. 1:18. 'Come now and let us reason together saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' The multitude of them, Isa. 55:7. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' Your frequent backslidings, Jer. 3:1, 4. 'They say, if a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me saith the Lord. Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth?' Come to Christ, unite with him by faith, in the way of the covenant, and God will pardon and adopt you.

Case 2. But I fear I never will be able to carry as a child of God. Ans. Is it thy sincere purpose to labour to conform thyself to the manners of God's house? then he bids thee welcome into his family. He can do for his children, what no other father can do, even transform them into his own image and likeness, and preserve them by his mighty power through faith unto salvation.

THE DIVINE CALL TO LEAVE THE DEVIL'S FAMILY, EXPLAINED AND URGED.*

2 COR. 6:17, 18.—Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

THE sacred feast before us the Lord makes for his own children in the lower house, and for them only. His children that are above need it not. The children of the devil, which all in a state of nature are, will not get the welcome of the Master of the feast to it, for he has made it only for those of his own family. But there is another family that bears the greatest bulk in the world, and that is Satan's: and all the world belongs to one of the two. The apostle tells us there can be no communion or agreement betwixt these two families, ver. 14, 15, 16. But God making up his family of such as are brought out of Satan's, the gospel is sent into the world to invite sinners to desert their natural father's house, promising them thereupon a kindly reception into the family of God, both which we have in the text. Wherein is,

1. The gospel-call to sinners. And that is to come out from among them, &c. And here is,

(1.) The substance of the duty, Come out from among them. This black society, which ye are called to come out of, is that of unbelievers, unrighteousness, darkness, idolaters, headed by Belial, the devil; that is, in a word, the world lying in wickedness; all the unconverted world, which the text and context represents as the devil's family, to which the family of God is opposed. To come out from among them, is to come out of your natural state, to renounce the devil, the world, and sin, and to come to Christ by faith. And that the text aims at no less than this, (though it is pertinently enough applied to renouncing external visible church-communion with idolaters), I think it is evident from this, that adoption into God's family is proposed and promised on compliance with this call, ver. 18. And let men separate as they will, till they make this holy separation, that they can never have.

(2.) The manner of the duty. [1.] Ye must come away freely, and for altogether: Be ye separate. A withdrawing for a time while the relation stands betwixt you and them, will not do; there must be a total separation, by going to the contrary side, and setting up in opposition to them: Be ye separate. Thus the apostle explains, Isa. 52:11 whence this is taken. [2.] Ye must come away cleanly and honestly, taking up nothing of theirs to carry away with you, as Rachael did her father's images: Touch not the unclean thing. Thus God himself calls you away: Saith the Lord.

2. The gospel-offer and promise, on compliance with the call, I will receive you. I will take you in, viz. into my house and family; namely, as children by adoption, having left your natural Father, the devil. Compare ver. 18 which we explained before.

I observe from the words the following doctrine, viz.

DOCT. 'The Lord calls to sinners to come freely and cleanly away out of the devil's family, promising thereupon to take them into his own family, as children of his house by adoption.'

Having at large explained the doctrine of the divine adoption from ver. 18 and applied it in the way of trial, I have chosen further to pursue that design, in a way of exhortation, in the words of this text. To prepare which for application, I shall only,

I. Shew you a few things implied in this call.

II. What this coming out from among them is.

I. I shall shew you a few things implied in this call.

1. Sinners naturally are of the devil's family, John 8:44. Ye are in among them, else there were no need of coming out from among them. The family of Satan consists of devils, damned spirits of men, and all the unconverted world lying in wickedness; in a word, of all those that are not of the family of God. All these are under one head,

the prince of devils. And accordingly, when time is at an end, they shall all be housed under one dreadful roof for ever, Matth. 25:41. O! unconverted sinner, thou art a son of the house of hell, (what ever blood run in thy veins), a prison-house, a dark house, a dreadfully miserable house, Matth. 23:15. Never was a child liker a father than thou art like the devil. He is a fallen creature, lying in wickedness; his nature is enmity against God and his holy law; so art thou and thine. And though thou put a fair face on it by a form of godliness, that will not make thee unlike him, who can transform himself into an angel of light. So thou art among them.

2. It is possible thou may get out from among them. Satan has a great family, one part whereof he has in the lower house, in hell; these are devils and damned spirits. If once he get you down among them, ye cannot get out from among them again, but must abide among them for ever and ever. So this call has nothing ado with that part of the devil's family; they are past hope. But there is another part of it in his upper house of this world, who as really belong to his family as the other, 2 Cor. 4:4 with this difference, that as long as they are there, he is never quite sure of them, that as sons they shall abide in his house for ever. The elder brother of the family of heaven, the Lord of his Father's house, has his lower house in this same world, where Satan has his upper one; and he has his Father's commission to fill it out of Satan's family, those of them in his upper house. And for this cause he sends out his ambassadors, ministers, to call in the name of the Lord to them, as in the text, Come out from among them, &c. 'Forget thine own people, and thy Father's house,' Psal. 45:10. They must be in earnest with that part of the family, and give them no rest, because there is yet hope, Luke 14:23 and he has a Spirit that can draw them out effectually, that are farthest in, in the house.

3. Ye will not be carried away from among them against your will. Ye must come away voluntarily, setting down your own feet to make your escape, Psal. 110:3. There is a generation that makes the doctrine of man's impotency too good a pillow for their sloth: they say they can do nothing, and they will do nothing. But if ye were

willing to come away, ye would do something for that end; ye would stretch out the withered hand, ye would take the help of Christ's grace offered unto you, ye would take no rest till ye were got away.

4. Ye need not expect to get the good-will of your father, nor of the family, to the parting. The call is directed to you, without noticing them; for it is known, they will never let you go as long as they can hinder you. Therefore you must be resolute and peremptory, in spite of all opposition, to come away from among them, Mat. 11:12. No sooner does one begin to stir out from among them, but he will raise the hue and cry after him. Hell's flatterings and threatenings are all plied to get them back again, and to lay aside their purpose. But ye must stop your ears to them all, and look not behind you, as Lot's wife did, Gen. 19:17.

5. Ye must come out from among them, for good and all. Be ye separate. Come away wholly, come away for ever, Psal. 45:10. Come away, with a sincere purpose never to go back among them, Psal. 80:18. Leave not your heart behind you. Remember Lot's wife, who was turned into a pillar of salt, for the rueful look she gave to what she had left in Sodom. They that come not away thus freely separating from them, they will not go far away, they will not go off the devil's ground: and they will go back again, if the communion were over.

6. Lastly, Take up nothing from among them, to bring along with you: Touch not the unclean thing. There are many who meaning to come out from among them, secure themselves in the devil's snare, and shut the door of the house of heaven on themselves, by the preparation they make for the journey.

(1.) They think they will need something in God's house for their hearts to feed upon. They think Christ's blood will do well enough for their consciences; but to get something to stop the mouths of their hungry hearts, that must have something to feed upon, they bring along with them some of the provision of the house they came from.

[1.] Some of the dust they were wont to eat with the serpent: some lust or other, which they have sucked much sap and sweetness out of, and they know not how to live without it, more than Herod without his Herodias, or Judas without the bag, &c. But remember, if ye touch that unclean thing, God will not receive you. Leave it then behind you to the devil from whence it came; it is his proper food, Isa. 65 ult. all the pleasure he has lies in such things. Say ye, 'I have behaved and quieted myself as a child, that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child,' Psal. 131:2. [2.] Some of the husks they were wont to eat with the swine, Luke 15:16; the dry, sapless, foisonless world, that Satan used to dress up to them, as best suited their palate, in the pleasures, vanities, profits, and pomp of it. But touch not the unclean thing, Cant. 4:8; and drop that unclean bulky vanity, and come away. There is no need of any such provision in our heavenly Father's house, that is abundantly provided with the product of the better country, Isa. 55:2.

(2.) They think they will need something on them, suitable to the new house they are coming to, that they come not in among them like hand-beggars. And so they take up the garb of the house they come from; and bring it with them, even the filthy unclean garment of their own righteousness, the loathsome rags of the pretended good that is in them, or about them, to commend them to Christ. But O drop the nasty garment, and touch not that unclean thing, Isa. 64:6. Come away naked and bare, and receive the blessing in the elder brother's clothes, or ye cannot have it. Seek nothing to commend you to him, but your utter misery, vileness and want of all things. The more you bring with you to commend you to him, the more securely ye shut his door on you.

II. The next head is to shew what this coming out from among them is. It is no local motion, but a spiritual motion of the soul; and I give it you briefly in three steps.

1. A hearty and unfeigned willingness to leave them, and to come out from among them. This is the first step. And O what a deal of work is

there, ere the sinner can be brought this length! No less than the power of grace is able to bring the soul to this, Psal. 110:3. 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.' It is a dead grip the sinner takes of his father's house, and he will shift hither and thither ere he let go the grip. It is as death to him to think of parting with his dear lusts, that are to him as a right hand or eye, which neither promises nor threatenings can make him consent to part with, till grace loose the heart. Whosoever then has got the length of this, they have made the first stop, which is the most difficult one.

2. An actual renouncing and giving up with that house, and all that belongs to it. The soul being willing to leave it, actually gives up with it, Job 34:32; renounces its natural relation to that society, their work, their way; resolving, come what will, to stay no longer there among them, it bids an eternal farewell to it. Though a Red Sea appear before such persons, which they know not how they will get through, they are peremptory they will not return to the spiritual Egypt, the house of their soul's bondage. This is the second step.

3. Lastly, A sincere acceptance of Jesus Christ by faith, in the marriage-covenant held forth in the gospel; whereby they take him for all, and instead of all, and give themselves to him, to be his only, wholly, and for ever, Cant. 2:16. There is no interdependent state betwixt the two families, but the soul lifting the one foot, as it were sets down the other. It lets go the hold of its lusts and idols, by embracing of Jesus Christ, not only for a rest to the conscience, but a rest to the heart; and embracing Christ as the one pearl of great price, lets go all that it has. Thus the soul is united to Jesus Christ, and is come out from among them, as one that is married is from that moment no more of her father's house, but her husband's. So the soul, though in the midst of the world lying in wickedness, is no more of that society, but come out from among them, John 15:19.

Now, the souls thus joined to Christ, are by him introduced to his Father's house and presence, and by him adopted as his children, as Jacob did the two sons of Joseph for his sake.

I shall not here stand to confirm the doctrine, since it is very plain from the text, and I confirmed the certainty of adoption into God's family, to those that comply with the gospel-call, the last day; but shall proceed to the application; which I make in the words of the text.

Wherefore, O sinners, 'Come forth from among them, and be ye separate', &c. It is the Lord's call to you this day to come away freely and cleanly out of the devil's family, and the Lord will take you in. Hearken unto this,

1. Ye that have lived all your days at ease in Satan's family, never knew ye were there, and were never troubled how to get out of it. Open your eyes, and know your natural state; see yourselves children of the devil, and heirs of wrath, at length; and sleep no longer the sleep of death, but look about you; see your danger, and come out from among them, and be ye separate to-day.

2. Ye that sometimes have had an awakening, and seen yourselves undone, but have fallen asleep again, and look on that former fright as a dream. Know ye that it was most real, and represented your case to you as indeed it was, and yet is: and Satan it is, who to keep you still among them, deluded you to think that God's armies advancing against you were but the shadow of the mountains. Wherefore bestir yourselves, and come out from among them.

3. Ye apostates and backsliders, that sometimes seemed to make considerable advances in coming out, but now have gone back in among them, and fallen afresh to the entertainment, the work and manners of the house. Our Lord gives you a new call to come out from among them and go on your way again, Jer. 3:22.

4. Ye that are halting, and in a doubt what to do, whether to come out from among them or not. Conscience is pressing you forward, and corruption drawing you back. Something tells you, 'Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.' Something else is saying, It is

too soon, there will be time enough after this. Know this last is the language ye hear among them that seek the ruin of your souls. Take no heed to what they say, but resolutely come out from among them.

5. Ye that have been often aiming at coming, but never yet have come away freely and cleanly. Make a fair and cleanly separation now, Touch not the unclean thing. Give up with your natural father's house, and have no more to do with any thing that belongs to it. Let no beloved lust be spared. Leave not a hoof behind you, as being minded never to return.

6. Lastly, All that desire for Heaven or the favour of God, in time or eternity, come out from among them. And be still coming farther and farther from them, and nearer to Jesus Christ. I offer the following motives.

Mot. 1. It is a most miserable case to be among them, the true sight whereof may frighten one out of their society. Never could one that was in a den of lions, or beset with serpents, or enclosed with venomous creatures, be more desirous to be from among them, than God's elect to be out of the world lying in wickedness, out of the devil's family, when once the Spirit of the Lord has opened their eyes to see clearly where they are, Luke 15:17, 18. For,

1. There is mot, and never will be, any peace with heaven among them. This is the apostle's argument in the text, ver. 14–17. Sooner shall light and darkness agree, than the two families of heaven and hell. God has declared they are a society with whom he will have war for ever, Isa. 57 ult. Some of the devil's family may be roaring on account of God's felt enmity against them, while others have a profound peace; but the one as well as the other stand for marks to the arrows of God's justice, Deut. 19:19, 20. As long as thou art among them, thou art an enemy to God, and God is an enemy to thee, Rom. 8:7. Luke 19:27. Wilt thou be able to endure this? No; Come out from among them, and be ye separate, &c.

2. There is not, and never will be, any thing pure or clean among them. Touch not the unclean thing, i. e. Meddle not with any thing that belongs to them. For they, and all that is theirs, are unclean and loathsome in the sight of God, Tit. 1:15. As long as thou art among them, thy whole soul in all its faculties is utterly defiled, and so are all thy works, even the best of them; for thou canst do nothing but sin, canst do no good at all, Psal. 14:1. The opening of thy mouth to God in prayer or praise, is but like the opening of an unripe grave; all thy fair promises and engagements to duty, are but abominable deceit, Rom. 3:13. The meddling with God's holy things, see what it is, Isa. 66:3. 'He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man: he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck: he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood: he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol: yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.' For a child of the devil can never please God in any thing, till he come out from among them, and be separate, Heb. 11:6.

3. There is nothing but rank poverty among them, nor ever will be, Rev. 3:17. The best raiment among them to cover the soul's nakedness, is rags, filthy rags. And they must appear before God as their Judge; and that is all they have to hide their shame, and it will never do. The whole family is drowned in debt to the justice of God, and they have nothing wherewith to pay. Sin is the debt, and it will be exacted; and as long as ye are among them, ye cannot have a cautioner, for in the whole family there is not one that is able to answer for it. And there is no forgiveness of the debt, while ye remain among them, Acts 3:19.

4. There is a cloud of wrath hangs above them continually, and abideth on them, and every one that is among them, John 3 ult. While ye are among them, your state is a state of wrath, and ye are children of wrath. There is never a gleam of light or favour towards you, Psal. 7:11. There is never one word of God speaks peace to you. While ye dwell among them, ye dwell under Mount Sinai, that fiery mountain where the curses of a broken law are flying about your

ears. And though being asleep ye are secure, ye shall no sooner be awakened, than ye shall see the fearful lightnings, hear the thunders of wrath, and the voice of the trumpet, &c. Therefore I would say to you, as Deut. 1:6. 'Come out from among them; ye have dwelt too long in this mount.'

5. Death reigns among them. See where they sit, Matth. 4:16. 'In the region and shadow of death.' The whole society are a parcel of condemned criminals, John 3:18 that know not how soon the sentence shall be executed upon them; their father the devil ready to be the executioner; they are all in a dying condition, their souls have got their death's wounds, and they are pining away in their iniquity, while in the meantime their eyes are held that they cannot see the preciousness of the Physician. Nay, they are dead already in a spiritual sense; God, the life of the soul, is departed far from them. O! why will ye stay in the congregation of the dead? Come out from among them to the Lord of life.

6. Lastly, They are not to stay in this upper house of the world; they will all be down in the lower house together ere long. The devil's upper house is a throng house now; but the day comes that God will set it on fire about their ears, 2 Pet. 3:10. And then the whole family shall go away together into the bottomless pit, and be all under one roof, so as not one shall remain behind. There are some dropping down to it daily; yet the rest remain secure; but it will not be always so. There was a dreadful cry at Dathan and Abiram's downgoing, Num. 16:34. What a cry will there be, when the whole family shall go down together? Rev. 20 ult. Therefore I would say to you, as Num. 16:26. 'Come out from among them; depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.'

Mot. 2. Come out from among them, and be ye separate; and the Lord will take you into his family, and that in the quality of sons and daughters. Ye have his word expressly for it in the text: and that has

been the lot of all that came away before you, John 1:12. And that this may take with you, consider,

1. The glorious society ye shall be taken into, being taken as children into God's family by adoption. The apostle declares this at large, Heb. 12:22–24.

2. I might say much to the commendation of the Father of the family. He is the most honourable, loving, and helpful, and rich father, the wisest father, and he is an immortal father. His children shall never be fatherless; let all the world leave them, they shall have a father to take them up. And while they are under minority, they shall have the best attendants. The elder brother of the family is fairer than the sons of men; and he is of our nature, and will own us as of his flesh and of his bones, Eph. 5:30. And the most loving to his adopted brethren; he died for them while they were yet in the devil's family. And he can do all with his father, having the entire management of the house of heaven, John 5:22. He is a most compassionate and merciful High Priest. The Spirit of the family is a noble spirit, that will spirit you for the greatest achievements; a holy and sanctifying Spirit, that will make the vilest heart holy; a quickening Spirit, an enlightening Spirit. And all the children partake of this Spirit.

3. Ye shall have glorious privileges here; and, among the rest, establishment and perseverance in the family, John 8:35. Come once in, and ye shall never be cast out.

4. Lastly, The full possession of your eternal inheritance in heaven, Matth. 25:34. He will give the kingdom to all his children, sons and daughters. Your elder brother will give you to sit on his throne.

Come out from among them, then, unto Jesus Christ, and so be entered into God's family by adoption. Seemeth it a small thing to you to be children of the house of heaven, to have God for your Father, and ye to be his sons and daughters. Believe this offer of the gospel, therefore, made to you, O children of the house of hell, and

close with the offer of adoption into God's family, and receive the seal of it in the sacrament. I beseech you to accept it, nay, I charge you to come out from among them this day, and enter into God's family through Jesus Christ, under the pain of God's eternal displeasure. What ails you at it; the language of the hearts of many will be,

1. They do not like the laws of the house. They think it would be what would take away their liberty, and pent them up to intolerable bondage. Ans. No; Satan's service is slavery, and the worst of slavery. If ye continue in it, your chains will be ever on you; the chains of your lusts are rattling about you now, 2 Tim. 2:26 and the chains of wrath will be rattling about you through eternity, Matth. 22:13. But those of God's family enjoy true liberty, John 8:36. And their liberty shall be enlarged afterward, and be very glorious, Rom. 8:21.

2. They like not the society of the house. They think it is but the peevish silly part of mankind, the scum of the world, that trouble themselves with these things. Ans. No; they are the excellent in the earth, Prov. 12:26. David, a king, thought them so, Psal. 16:3. Why do ye despise them, but because they are of another spirit than the spirit of the devil's family? Remember, that 'not many wise men after the flesh are called,' &c. 1 Cor. 1:26, 27, 28. But I assure you the main quarrel and the ground of this is, ye like not the Father of the family, and therefore not those that bear his image, 1 John. 5:1. However, remember, that the day will come when you will say, O that my soul were in their soul's stead! 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.'

3. Lastly, They do not believe any such thing, as that God will make men his sons and daughters. Ans. Then ye do not believe God's word in the text, John 1:12. Christ's death and sufferings must lose their end, Gal. 4:4, 5. But ye will be cured of that, if not before, yet at their receiving their inheritance as children, Matth. 25:34 when unbelievers get their doom.

But there may be some that would fain believe it, and that with application too, that they might come away and partake of it. But Satan and their hearts muster up objections against it; such as,

1. Was it ever heard, that there was an adoption where the party adopting was not childless? Ans. Gods ways are not man's ways. It is free grace only, and not need, that puts the heavenly Father to adopt any of his creatures.—Yet there is a suitableness in it to the divine wisdom. God's family suffered a vast diminution by the spiritual death of children, and thus it is made up again.

2. But how is it consistent with the honour of the adopter to take men as children into his family? Ans. This is provided for by the incarnation of the Son; man's nature is thereby nobilitated. The Son of God became the Son of man, that so the sons of men might become the sons of God, in a consistency with God's honour.

3. But I am afraid God will never take me into his family. Ans. Wherefore, if ye come in by the door, through Jesus Christ? The greatness of your former sins will not hinder it, Isa. 1:18 the multitude of them, 1 John 1:7 your backslidings neither, Jer. 3:22 though ye have been the worst of sinners, 1 Cor. 6:9, 10, 11. In ye must be, or ye perish.

4. But Satan plies me at a terrible rate, so that I think I will never get away out from among them. Ans. When the devil apprehends his time short, he has great wrath.—When the children of Israel were nearest their deliverance, Pharaoh made their bondage hardest. Be resolute, like the lepers of old.

5. Lastly, But I fear I will never be able to carry suitably to the character of one of the heavenly family. Ans. Take Christ for sanctification, put your heart and life in his hand this day, for purifying and managing it, Eph. 5:25, 26. 'Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word.' Believe the promises of

sanctification; look on them as sealed by the sacrament, and conscientiously use the means of holiness.

To shut up all, I testify to every one, that they are undone, for ever, if they come not out from among them, and be separate, and touch no unclean thing; and that there is nothing to hinder your entrance into God's family, if ye be content to come out from among them, and to close with Christ. He will receive you, and introduce you into his Father's family, entertain you at his table, and at length carry you to the upper house, where ye shall be for ever with the Lord.

OF SANCTIFICATION

1 CORINTHIANS 6:11.—But ye are sanctified—by the Spirit of our God.

IN this verse the apostle tells the believing Corinthians.

1. What some of them sometime were, such, viz. as those, ver. 9, 10. 'fornicators, idolators, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners;' even the worst and grossest sinners, who therefore could have nothing to move God to sanctify them.

2. What they now all were, viz. the true believers among them; they were 'washed.' Though some of them in their natural state were more unclean and vile than others, yet they all needed to be, and accordingly were washed,

(1.) In sanctification, whereby sin itself is gradually carried out of the heart and life, and grace planted therein, and actuated and advanced. This is done by the Spirit of God, who is holy, and makes the elect holy.

(2.) In justification, whereby the guilt of sin is removed, and the soul clothed with a perfect righteousness. This is done 'in the name of the Lord Jesus;' i. e. by the merits and blood of Christ, through Christ apprehended by faith. The apostle's order of stating these two will be considered afterwards.

The doctrine of the text is as follows, viz.

DOCT. 'All that are effectually called, are freely sanctified by the Spirit of Christ.'

In treating of this subject, I shall shew,

I. The general notion of sanctification.

II. More particularly inquire into the nature of it.

III. Deduce some inferences.

I. I will lay before you the general nature of sanctification. It imports three things.

1. Separation, or setting apart to a holy use or service.—Thus the bread and wine in the sacrament are sanctified, and thus Aaron and his sons were sanctified. And thus the sanctification of the Spirit, is the Lord's taking one out of the corrupt mass of mankind lying in wickedness, and setting him apart for himself, Psal. 4:3. So that holiness is God's mark and seal set on a soul, testifying it to be his in a peculiar manner, Eph. 1:13.

2. Purification, or taking away of pollution. Thus people are called to sanctify themselves. There is a natural impurity and filthiness that every soul naturally is sunk in, 2 Cor. 7:1. They are loathsome in the sight of God, all over defiled with filthy lusts. Sanctification is the Spirit's cleansing of the soul from its impurities; breaking the reign of sin, working out sin from the heart and life, as the spring doth the mud cast into it.

3. Preparation, whereby a thing or person is made fit for use or service. Thus our food is sanctified by the word and prayer. Naturally we are unfit for God's service; sanctification fits us for it, 2 Tim. 2:21. What use are we for in the world, if not for God? But the unsanctified soul is not meet for his use: but the Lord loathes them, and their services too, as one would do liquor in a foul vessel.

II. More particularly, I will inquire into the nature of the sanctification of a soul. And let us consider,

1. The kinds of sanctification.

2. The Author of it.

3. The moving cause of it.

4. Wherein it consists.

5. The parts of it.

6. The subject of it.

7. The effect of it.

8. How it is carried on.

9. The means of it.

FIRST, I shall consider the kinds of sanctification distinguishable. Sanctification of a soul is twofold.

1. Initial sanctification, which is the implanting of the seeds of grace in the soul at first, and is the same with regeneration, 1 John 3:9 wherein the Spirit of Christ comes into the man's heart with his graces, and takes possession of him for God. The whole soul is cast into a new mould and frame, and the image of God is drawn anew upon it.

2. Progressive sanctification, whereby that change is carried on more and more, the Spirit holding hand to the begun work, Acts 20:32. Satan's image is more defaced, and the image of God more perfected in the soul; corruption more weakened, and grace more excited and strengthened. This work lasts through the saint's whole life, and is never perfected till death.

These are one and the same work for substance, though differing in circumstances; and no man has the one, but he has the other too. Initial sanctification goes before justification in the order of nature, as being the principle from which faith doth arise; and this accounts for the apostle's order in the text: but progressive sanctification, i. e. sanctification distinguished from regeneration, follows justification.

SECONDLY, Let us consider the Author of sanctification, whose work it is.

1. Negatively, It is not the sinner himself, nor any other creature, who is the author of it. We can well defile ourselves with all impurity, but cannot cleanse ourselves. We will lie still in our filthiness, till help come from another quarter, Eph. 2:1. We are bid to cleanse our hands and hearts: but, alas! the rule of our duty is not the measure of our strength.

2. Positively, It is the work of God; for it needs no less power than was necessary for creating a world, or raising the dead. It is the work of a whole Trinity to sanctify a soul, as lightly as many think of being holy. It is the work of the Father, Jude, ver. 1 'Sanctified by God the Father;' of the Son, Eph. 5:26. 'That he (Christ) might sanctify—it;' of the Holy Spirit, 2 Thess. 2:13. 'Through sanctification of the Spirit.' But in a special manner it belongs to the Spirit; as the Father elects, the Son redeems, and the Holy Ghost sanctifies. It is the work of the Spirit of God then. For,

1. In initial sanctification the Spirit acts alone, and the poor sinner is wholly passive, and can do nothing that way. For he is dead in sin,

and cannot move out of its dominion. He lies in the grave like the dry bones, which cannot live, nor stand up till they be breathed upon by the Lord himself.

2. In progressive sanctification, though the sinner does act towards his own sanctification, 2 Cor. 7:1 yet he acts not but as he is acted by the Holy Spirit, Phil. 2:13. In vain will he spread out his sails, if the wind from heaven blow not, Cant. 4:16. No blow of his struck in the battle against lusts will do execution, if the Spirit do not carry it home.

THIRDLY, The moving cause of it. Sanctification is a great benefit: whom the Lord bestows it upon, he puts an honour on, for they are set apart for himself. There is an intrinsic glory in holiness, Psal. 45:13. 'The King's daughter is all glorious within.' God is glorious in it, and therefore no wonder it be the glory of the creature. When the Lord makes one holy, he does more for him than if he would give him all the gold of the Indies, or make him sole monarch of the world. Nay, the gift of sanctification is more worth than the Spirit of prophecy, or the faith of miracles: for men may be ruined notwithstanding these, but not if they have this.

The only cause of it is free grace, not any personal worth in the creature, Tit. 3:5. As the sun shines without hire, and enlightens the dark world; so does the Holy Spirit sanctify the unholy sinner freely, without any thing in him to move him thereto, Matth. 11:25, 26. For,

1. There is nothing in an unholy sinner that is pleasing and acceptable in God's sight, Rom. 8:8. There is nothing but stench and rottenness in the dead soul, till the sanctifying Spirit enter into him. His best dispositions, actions, and performances, are sin, being without faith, and the mere product of nature unrenewed.

2. Though there be a great difference betwixt natural men before the world, one having by far the advantage of the other in respect of their natural tempers and the way of their life; yet the Lord does not give

his sanctifying grace according to these advantages, but oft-times grace takes hold of those who are most unlikely to get it, 1 Cor. 1:26, 27, &c. Publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of God before Scribes and Pharisees. And oft-times sovereign grace overlooks those of the most sweet natural dispositions, and brings in those of the most rugged.

3. Sovereign grace often chuses the time for sanctifying the sinner, when he has gone the farthest length in sin and wickedness. Paul was carried the length of blasphemy and persecution, ere sanctifying grace took hold of him, 1 Tim. 1:13. And Manasseh was carried to horrid murders and witchcraft, ere he was prevented by divine grace. Many have been carried to extraordinary acts of wickedness, whereby they have lost their lives in the course of justice whom grace has plucked as brands out of the burning, to proclaim the freedom of grace.

FOURTHLY, I shall shew wherein sanctification consists, or what the Spirit doth to a sinner when he sanctifies him. It consists in the renewing of the sinner after the image of God, Eph. 4:23, 24. The ruin of man's nature lay in defacing the image of God which was upon him: sanctification is the renewing and repairing of it, without which God can take no delight in his creature. Now, in all renewing, the old is put away, and the new brought in. So there are two acts of the Spirit in sanctification.

1. Destroying of the body of sin, called the old man, Rom. 6:6 putting it away, Col. 2:11. The Spirit of the Lord breaks the dominion of sin in the soul, and turns it off the throne, that it cannot command the sinner as aforetime, Rom. 6:14 weakens and mortifies the several lusts thereof, Rom. 8:13. So that it is a crucified man, who has got his death's wounds by the nails, and shall not come down till he die out.

2. Endowing the sinner with grace, even with all the graces of the Spirit, John 1:16 whereby the sinner becomes a new creature, 2 Cor. 5:17. This is the new man which is put on in sanctification; the seed

of heaven, which can never misgive, but will spring up to everlasting life, being carried on towards perfection, by the same Spirit.

FIFTHLY, The parts of sanctification are two.

1. Mortification, whereby the sinner is enabled more and more to die unto sin, Rom. 6:4, 6. The Spirit applying the virtue of Christ's death to the sinner, mortifies him to sin, blunts the edge of his affection to sin and sinful courses, so that in respect of sin, he is like a dying man. So that although he be not quite freed from it yet he is on the way to be so. His lusts are upon the cross, nailed through and pierced to the heart, not to come down till they have breathed out their last, Gal. 5:24. Like a dying man taking leave of friends, he is parting with his old lusts: like a man leaving off cares about the world, the bent of his soul is turned away from his former courses.

2. Vivification, whereby the sinner is enabled more and more to live unto righteousness, Rom. 6:4. The sanctified sinner leads a new life, in respect of which he is as a man raised from the dead, not meddling as before in the business of the world: so the sanctified sinner lives as one of another world, not conforming himself to the sinful courses of this world, but being transformed into likeness to those of the better world, Rom. 12:2. Phil. 3:20. The business of his life is to serve the Lord, and work out his own salvation; to be preparing for the eternal rest in heaven, whither his heart is carried before him.

SIXTHLY, Let us view the subject of sanctification.—Under which consider,

1. Who are sanctified.

2. What of them is sanctified,

First, Who are sanctified. It is the elect who are sanctified, even all of them, and they only, Eph. 1:4. 2 Thess. 2:13. And elect infants among the rest, dying in infancy, being naturally corrupted must needs be sanctified too, by the Holy Spirit, since they are of the number of the

elect. For others may be sanctified from the womb, Jer. 1:5. And none other but the elect do partake of this grace of sanctification: so that sanctification is a certain evidence of election.

Secondly, What of them is sanctified. The whole man is sanctified, 2 Cor. 5:17. 1 Thess. 5:23. The grace of sanctification is a holy leaven, that goes through the whole lump, and makes every part of the man holy.

1. The soul is sanctified in all the faculties thereof, new qualities being infused into and advanced in them. (1.) The understanding naturally darkened, is renewed in saving knowledge, after God's image, Col. 3:10. A new light is struck out in the mind; the light of grace arises there, whereby the soul knows spiritual things in another manner than before; and this advanceth unto the perfect day, Prov. 4:18. (2.) The will, naturally perverse and rebellious, gets a righteous set and bent, agreeable to the will of God, Eph. 4:24. whereby it is averse to evil, and prone to good. (3.) The unholy affections are made holy, *ibid.* So that their love, hatred, delight, sorrows, &c. are changed. And herewith comes along the sanctification of the conscience and memory.

2. The body is sanctified, in so far as it is made the temple of the Holy Spirit, and a member of Christ, 1 Cor. 6:15, 19. And the members thereof are changed in respect of their use, becoming instruments of righteousness employed for the Lord, Rom. 6:13. In respect of which the body is presented a holy sacrifice to God, to serve and honour him with, whether by doing or suffering, Rom. 12:1.

But although the whole man is sanctified, yet no part of the man is perfectly sanctified in this life. It is neither midnight to them as with the unregenerate, nor mid-day as with the glorified, but twilight, which is a mixture of darkness and light. Hence arises the combat betwixt the flesh and Spirit, Gal. 5:17. Every grace has a weed of the contrary corruption by the side of it, which occasions this struggle, and imperfection in the best of their works.

SEVENTHLY, I am to shew the effect of sanctification. That is holiness. The fruit of this work of the Spirit is habitual holiness, that is, an habitual aversion of the soul to evil, and inclination to good; and actual holiness in all manner of life and conversation, in good works, which have God's word for their rule, his glory for their end, and are done in faith. Both which we have, Psal. 45:13. 'The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold.'

EIGHTHLY, I proceed to shew how sanctification is carried on. Now, though sanctification must needs be begun in an instant, yet it is not a simple act, but a work carried on by degrees, to which many actions (and these repeated) of the Holy Spirit do concur. The believer not being perfectly renewed at first, the renovation is carried on by degrees, and the Spirit is at that work still, so as not to give it over till it be perfected, though there be many interruptions of it. And,

1. The Spirit implants grace in the soul, sows the heavenly seed there, framing the heart anew, giving it a new power, and a new set, towards God and his law; and putting in new motions and inclinations in the soul, agreeable to the holy law, and contrary to the natural sinful ones, Heb. 8:10. So that the soul is inclined to love what before it loathed, and to loath what before it loved.

2. He preserves the grace implanted, 1 Pet. 1:5. Though it is lodged in the same heart with an ill neighbour, the remains of natural corruption; yet he keeps it that it do not die out, he preserves it as a spark of fire in the midst of the ocean.

3. He excites it and quickens it, to pursue and resist the flesh, Phil. 2:13. Grace sometimes may fall so very low in the soul, that it becomes like a spark hid under the ashes: yet the sanctifying Spirit blows it up again into a flame, Cant. 4:16. As the tree in the winter divested of its leaves and verdure, when the warm sun returns in the spring, the sap driven to the root returns, and is diffused through the whole.

4. He strengthens it by new supplies, Isa. 40 ult. so as the soul is enabled more and more to hold on the battle, and gets victories of the enemy, 2 Cor. 12:9, 10. For grace is a child of heaven, which has all its nourishment and strength from the same Spirit that gave it life.

5. Lastly, At death, but not till then, he perfects it, Heb. 12:23. Then the new man is brought to its perfect stature, Eph. 4:13. Often may the soul be ready to say, One day I will perish by the hand of such a lust. But the Spirit of God will perfect the work he has begun. And when the walls of the leprous house are taken down, the leprosy shall be quite removed. From what has been said, we may infer,

Inf. 1. The case of unsanctified sinners is a wretched case; they are lying with the lost world, in their filthiness, utterly unfit to serve God acceptably, or to have communion with him here or hereafter. For they are not sanctified, not separated, purified, nor prepared for God's service.

2. Behold the beauty of holiness, and fall in love with it, and labour to attain it. The holy man is more excellent than his neighbour, as set apart for God: 'Israel shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations,' because they are a holy people. It is the purity of the soul, God's image drawn on the man, it is a newness of nature from heaven, and like heaven. By it a man is a vessel fit for the Master's use, honourably employed now, and most honourably hereafter.

3. See the way how ye may be made holy. The fire from your own hearth will not purge you; faithless vows, resolutions, and endeavours, will not do it, Isa. 50 ult. The Spirit of the Lord can only perform the work. O! cry for the Spirit, wait on in ordinances for the blowing of the Spirit. Come to Christ by faith, that ye may partake of his Spirit.

4. Sanctification is not the work of a day, but a work that must be in a continual progress. Sit not down on any measure of grace attained.

They that are converted still need the Spirit for their sanctification. Beware of grieving the Spirit, lest the work be interrupted. Make no truce with the enemy, but pursue the lusts of the body of sin vigorously.

5. Lastly, See here that there are none so unholy, but they may be made holy. It is a work of grace, and grace is powerful to overcome the strongest lusts. It is a work of free grace, and therefore no vileness nor unworthiness of the creature, that is content to be made holy, can hinder it. This may lay the pride of some, who think they deserve grace, and whose hearts fret against the Lord, if grace be not given them in an hour of temptation. Man's heart perverteth his way, and fretteth against the Lord. And this may encourage those who think the Lord will never look on them.

LASTLY, Let us consider the means of sanctification.—The outward means that the Spirit makes use of in this work, and which have all their efficacy from him, are,

1. Ordinances, public, private, and secret, Isa. 12:3 especially the word, and sacraments thereto appended, Eph. 5:26. And they that would be holy must use these means of sanctification, whereby the Spirit begins and carries on the work.

2. Providences; smiling and favourable dispensations have a tendency that way, Rom. 2:4 but especially afflictions are means which the Spirit makes use of for this end, Isa. 27:9. 'By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.'

I shall now shut up this subject with a few inferences, besides those I drew under the former heads.

Inf. 1. Those who are unrenewed are unsanctified. Where there is no change of heart and life, there is no grace, 2 Cor. 5:17. Ah! how many live as they were born, and are like to die as they live? They have no changes, but from evil to evil: no change from sin to holiness, and yet

are unconcerned with their unrenewed state, sleeping until they sleep the sleep of death.

2. A partial change is not sanctification. Those who are changed, but not in the whole man, are not truly sanctified, but are yet in their natural pollution. Sanctification is not a new head full of knowledge, with the old heart and life; nor is it a new life, with the old heart and nature. But it is a change that goes through the whole soul and body, which must needs be followed with a new life, 2 Cor. 5:17.

3. True sanctification puts work into the hand of the sanctified, that will occupy them while they live. Dying to sin, and living to righteousness, are works that will fill up every minute we have in the world.

4. Let none be so foolish as to sit down contented without sanctification, but study holiness as ever ye would see heaven. We want a title to heaven, we must get that in justification and adoption: we want a meetness for heaven, and we must get that in sanctification. The sanctified are elected, and shall be glorified, 1 Pet. 1:1, 2, 4. And they that live and die unsanctified, shall never see heaven, Heb. 12:14. 'For without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'

5. Lastly, As ever ye would be holy, attend and improve the means of grace. Let not your afflictions drive you from God, neither be stupid under them, but fall in with the design of providence in them, for your sanctification.

UNION WITH CHRIST THE ONLY WAY TO SANCTIFICATION

1 COR. 1:30.—But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us—sanctification.

THE world in its greatest darkness was not insensible that man's nature was corrupted, that they needed something wherewith they might please God, attain to happiness, and repair the wound which they understood their nature had got. And although that Jews and Gentiles had different devices whereby they thought this might be obtained, yet all agreed in that it behoved them to go into themselves for it, and to draw something out of the ruins of their natural powers wherewith to help themselves, thereby discovering they did not sufficiently understand the depth of the corruption of human nature. And this principle is so agreeable to corrupt reason, that God's device to bring about man's salvation from sin and misery in and by another, to wit, Christ, was to 'the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness,' ver. 23. And if we sound to the bottom, it is the same at this day to the unregenerate part of the Christian world.

In the text we have the sum of God's device for the salvation of sinners, and it centres in Jesus Christ who was crucified. We may take up the text and it in these two things.

1. That the whole of man's salvation shall be from Christ. God has made or constituted him the fountain of all salvation, from whom it must be conveyed to all that shall partake of it. As Pharaoh made Joseph ruler over Egypt; and when the famished people cried to him for bread, he bade them go to Joseph, Gen. 41:55 so God has dealt with the Mediator, and tells us by the gospel, Psal. 89:24. 'My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.' If we look into the ruins of the fall we may take

them up under four heads, answerable to which there are remedies in Christ.

(1.) Man is ignorant naturally of the way to true happiness: he has lost God, and knows not how to find him again.—Falling into the hands of Satan, he has lost his two eyes, like Samson; gropes for the way of happiness, but cannot find it, like the Sodomites at Lot's door. Some remains of knowledge found in the ruins of the fall were improved in the world, by study, observation of the works of God, and in some by external revelation, which yet the natural darkness of the mind did pervert. And these notions, thus improved, they called wisdom. But the way of happiness by works, the only way naturally known by Adam, being blocked up by his fall, it was impossible for them by their wisdom to fall on the other way, unless we should say, that fallen man's natural knowledge could reach farther than his natural knowledge when it was whole and entire before the fall. So man's wisdom is his folly.

For remedy of this, Christ is made 'wisdom.' The treasures of wisdom and knowledge were lodged in him, Col. 2:3 and he is constituted the grand Teacher of all that seek for eternal happiness. Therefore the philosophers and Rabbi's must lay by their books, as insufficient to point them the way to happiness, and study that body of divinity, Jesus Christ, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily. The wise men of the world must renounce confidence in their natural abilities, draw a black score over all their attainments in their Christless state, and sit down at Christ's feet, as knowing nothing, and learn of him: and those of the shallowest capacities, giving up themselves to him, shall get 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,' 2 Cor. 4:6.

(2.) Man is unrighteous, and cannot stand before a righteous God. His guilt binds him over to wrath, and makes him miserable before a just God, a revenger of sin. And this is so impressed on the hearts of men, that even a natural conscience sometimes makes terrible heart-quakes within him, knowing the judgment of God, that they who

commit such things are worthy of death.' Now, the natural man, for remedy of this, goes about to work out a righteousness of his own, to spin a righteousness out of his own bowels, and to appease the anger of God, and gain his favour, by his obedience. But when it appears in the light of the holy law, it is nothing but as a filthy, rotten, moth-eaten garment, that cannot cover the soul before the Lord, Isa. 64:7. Let them stretch it as they will, the bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it.

For remedy of this, Christ is made righteousness. He, by his obedience to the law's commands and suffering the wrath it threatened, hath brought in everlasting righteousness, which is a large garment, able to cover all that betake themselves to it, for it is 'the righteousness of God; a beautiful garment, sound in every part, for it is white raiment, without the least stain, being the righteousness of the Son of God, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Therefore the most refined moralists may lay aside, in point of confidence, their highest attainments in morality, as filthy rags before the Lord; and the strictest professors and lovers on earth, who follow after the law of righteousness, must renounce their inherent righteousness, and sit down naked before the Lord, to receive the imputed righteousness of Christ. And the vilest of men coming to him, shall find a righteousness in him to be communicated to them; so that they that are far from righteousness shall be wrapt up in a perfect righteousness, if they will take Christ to them as God has made him.

(3.) Man is unholy, unfit for communion with a holy God here or hereafter. His soul is dead in sin, his lusts live and are vigorous in him; so that he is no more meet for heaven than a sow for a palace. The natural man, to help himself in this point, calls together his natural powers as in a solemn day, and endeavours to set about his duty, and turn the stream of his life and conversation into the channel of the law. Some prevail this way to the reformation of their outward conversation; but there is as much difference betwixt true

holiness and their attainment, as between a living body and an embalmed corpse. Others find all their endeavours to no purpose, and so they come to despair of sanctification, and therefore even lay the reins on the necks of their lusts, Jer. 2:25. And how can it be otherwise in either of them? for, like fools or madmen, they go into the mire to wash themselves clean; the house that must be razed from the foundation, they go to patch up and repair; for in their attempts for holiness, they act as if they had need of nothing but activity to use and improve their natural abilities for sanctification; which is as opposite to the doctrine of the gospel, as to say, the cripple needs but to set himself to rise and walk, and he will be cured, is contrary to common sense: for our natural abilities will serve us no more for sanctification, than the cripple's legs will serve him to walk. Let men learn from Job, that where the whole body is all full of boils and sores, their hands are not fit to scrape the sores on the rest of their body, being as ill themselves as any other part: therefore he took a potsherd, and scraped himself. And while to the unbelieving there is nothing pure; their very natural powers being defiled, can never purify the man.

But for remedy in this, Christ is made sanctification. There is a fulness of the spirit of holiness lodged in him, to be communicated to the unholy; and to him God sends the unholy sinner, that out of his fulness he may receive, and grace for grace. Therefore the most sober natural man and strictest professor, who has hammered out of his mere natural abilities, assisted by external revelation, a life blameless before the world, being estranged still to the life of faith, must know that he has but put a new face on the old man, which Christ never intended to repair, but to destroy, Rom. 6:6; and must begin anew to attain true holiness, from and by him whom the Father has made sanctification to us. And the most polluted sinner, whose lusts are most raging, may confidently try this grand method of sanctification, which can no more fail him than God's device can fail to reach the end he designed for it.

(4.) Man by the fall is become mortal, liable to many bodily infirmities and miseries, and at length must go to the grave, the house appointed for all living. Nature could find no remedy for this. The learned Athenians mocked at the resurrection of the dead, Acts 7:32; the Sadducees among the Jews denied it, Matth. 22:23. The unrenewed part of the world, who, by the benefit of external revelation, have embraced the doctrine of the resurrection, and particularly of the happy resurrection, have no other way to attain it, but what they follow to attain righteousness and sanctification; and that being insufficient to attain them, must be so also in this respect; for all their Christless endeavours leave them still under guilt and corruption; these bonds of death, wherewith the second death will draw them down into the pit, when they are raised out of their graves at the last day still hold them fast.

But man's salvation cannot be complete without a remedy for this; therefore Christ is made 'redemption,' who will give in due time deliverance to his people from misery and death, which is called 'the redemption of the body,' Rom. 8:23. And in this sense he calls himself 'the resurrection and the life,' John 11:25. So redemption is in him, in so far as he has got above death and the power of the grave by his resurrection, and that as a public person, thereby ensuring the happy resurrection of all that are in him. Therefore, if ever we would get our heads above these waters, we must come to him.

2. That all who partake of this salvation, must partake of it in him, by virtue of union with him: But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, &c. As the stock is stay, strength, and sap to the branches; so is Christ wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, to them that are in him, or unto sinners united to him. The sap of the stock is not conveyed to branches that are not in it: neither is Christ wisdom, &c. to any but those that are in him. He is the Saviour of his body; and we must partake of his salvation as members of his body. In the old world when the deluge came on, some without the ark getting up on the tops of trees or mountains, might be safe for a while; but none but those who were in the ark were safe to the end; so men that are

out of Christ may get common temporal favours from the Lord; but none but those in him receive that wisdom, &c. which is the great salvation. The lost world is the first Adam, and the natural branches of that stock. The saved world are such branches as are taken out of that dead and killing stock, and ingrafted into Christ the true vine.

This then is the grand device of salvation, that Christ shall be all to sinners, and that they must partake of all in him; which is quite opposite to our natural imaginations, and exalts the free grace of God, depressing nature. (1.) They do not help themselves, their help is in another: He is made wisdom, &c. (2.) They do not so much as help themselves to their helper; for it is of God, by the power of his grace, that they are brought to be in him. It is not the branch itself, but the husbandman that ingrafts it.

The doctrine I observe from the words is,

DOCT. 'God's device for the sanctification of an unholy world is, that sinners unite with Christ, and derive holiness from him, whom the Father has constituted the head of sanctifying influences. Union with Christ is the only way to sanctification.'

For proof of this doctrine, consider the following scriptures, Rom. 7:4. John 15:5. Gal. 2:20.

In handling this doctrine, I shall,

I. Drop a word concerning holiness derived from Christ.

II. Shew how it is derived from him.

III. Apply.

1. As to holiness, it is that disposition of heart and course of life which is conformable to God's holy law, and pleases him. In this life it is imperfect, but in the life to come it will be perfected. I shall only offer these few things concerning it.

1. True holiness is universal in respect of the commands of God, Psal. 119:6. 'I have respect unto all thy commandments;' the holy man making conscience of the duties of both tables of the law, his duty to God, his neighbour, and himself, Tit. 2:12. Whose divide these, declare themselves to be unholy persons, who cannot see God. A profane life is a sure evidence of a profane heart, Gal. 5:19. &c.

2. True holiness is not only in external duties, but necessarily includes internal obedience of the soul to the will of God, Psal. 24:3. The outward works of piety and charity will never denominate a man holy, without holy thoughts, affections, and imaginations. The heart must be a temple consecrated to God, wherein love, fear, delight in God, submission, patience, and all other parts of unseen religion, are exercised. The heart of the holy man is no more the devil's common, where thoughts go free, and lusts range at their ease, Psal. 119:113. 'I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love:' but it is God's inclosure, hedged about as a garden for the Lord. And though not without weeds of corruption, it is the holy man's constant work to be labouring to root them up.

3. In true holiness there is a bent, inclination, and propensity of heart, to the acts of obedience to God. The spirit, that is, the new nature, has its lustings, as well as the flesh, Gal. 5:17. By Adam's fall the hearts of men got a wrong set, a bent and propensity to evil, Rom. 8:7. Hos. 11:7. Now, in sanctification it is bent the other way, towards God and godliness, 2 Thess. 3:5 that as the needle in the compass, touched with a good loadstone, turns towards the north, so the heart, touched by sanctifying grace, inclines Godward and Christward. Whatever actions are done without this, are not holy actions, nor can they please God; for he that sees the heart, will never be pleased with those duties to which the man's heart does not kindly incline; for in effect it is but forced obedience, and he hates robbery for burnt-offering.

4. As the love of God is the great comprehensive duty of holiness, love is the fulfilling of the law; so love runs through all the duties of

religion, to give them the tincture of holiness, Heb. 6:10. And without this, should a man give all his goods to the poor, it profiteth nothing. Where self-love is the domineering principle, their duties are in God's account serving themselves, and not him. Holy duties are the obedience of a child who loves his father, and therefore serves him; not the obedience of a servant, who loves himself, and therefore serves for his wages.

5. True holiness is influenced by the command of God. The will of God is not only the rule, but the reason, of a holy life, John 5:30. Sanctification binds over the soul to the will of God, that it may follow duty, because it is his will. Though a man receive a scripture-truth, if he receive it not because God has said it, but upon principles of reason, his receiving it is not faith, for that is an assent upon the divine testimony. So if a man do a good thing, but not because God has commanded it, the action is no holy action, Psal. 119:115.

6. True holiness has for its chief end the glory of God, 1 Cor. 10:31. He that is the first cause of all goodness, must needs be the last end of it. And God being the chief good, loves himself above all, and acts for himself. Hence holy persons, being partakers of the divine nature, as they are holy, they will love God above all, and act for him and his glory; for the divine nature, wherever it is, will still move to exalt God above all. So that Sanctification makes a man's actions still centre in God, so far as it does prevail. The want of this mars a man's life and actions, so far as they are not holy, but selfish, Zech. 7:6.

7. Lastly, True holiness is universal. Sanctifying grace seeks through the whole man, and the whole of his course.

(1.) Mortification is universal, Gal. 5:24. 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.' The law of God is a chain of many links, and he that draws one to him draws all. He that kills a serpent, not out of any particular quarrel against it, but against the whole kind of them, will set himself to kill all of them that he discovers and can reach; so he that is truly sanctified is set against

and endeavours to mortify and kill all sin, as sin, and because it is sin; and every lust and corruption, even the most darling, that he can discover in himself, he will bring forth to execution, and put them all to death. It is no true mortification where one lust is spared. A man in some sickness may lose the power of a leg or an arm: but had it been death, he would have lost the power of all together.

(2.) Vivification is universal, 2 Cor. 5:17. As when the body of Christ was raised, there was life put into every member; so when the soul is raised to live the life of holiness, the image of God is repaired in all its parts, and the soul embraces the whole yoke of Christ, so far as it knows the same. So that sanctification sets a man on every known duty. The holy man is holy in his dealings with God and with men; not a pretender to piety, and a renouncer of honesty. He is holy alone, and holy in company: for though a man can put on or lay by a wooden leg, and carve it as he will, he cannot do so with a limb of his body.

II. I shall shew how this holiness is derived from Christ, according to the grand device of infinite wisdom for the sanctifying of an unholy world. For clearing which, consider these few things.

1. God made the first Adam holy, and all mankind was so in him, Eccl. 7:29. He gave him a holy nature, endued with a propensity to good, love to the Lord, and ability to keep all the commands. Thus mankind was set up in Adam; the stock was put into his hand for himself and for his posterity, which was to be conveyed to them by natural generation; for no reason can be given why we should not have derived a holy nature from Adam had he stood, seeing we derive a corrupt nature from him having fallen.

2. Adam, sinning lost the image of God, that holiness in which he was created, and turned altogether corrupt and averse to good. For by his sin he turned off from God as his chief end, and set up himself for his chief end, which could not but infer a total apostasy. He was laid under the curse by his sin, and God the life of his soul departed from

him; and so he was left dead in sin, having sinned away his life in the favour of God, and holy influences. So that all mankind are naturally dead in sin, seeing corrupt Adam could convey no nature to us but a corrupt nature, Gen. 5:3 together with the guilt of it, and the curse attending it.

3. Man's sanctification by himself thus being hopeless, for his nature being corrupted wholly, he could never sanctify his own heart or life, seeing no effect can exceed the virtue of its cause; it pleased God to constitute a Mediator, his own Son, to be the head of sanctifying influences to all that should partake of them. And again, he set up the human nature holy, harmless, and undefiled, which was united to the divine nature in the person of the Son. So Christ, God-man, was filled with the Spirit of holiness, and received a holy nature, to be conveyed from him to those that are his by spiritual generation, Eph. 2:10. And the Mediator being God as well as man, and the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily, there can never be wanting sanctifying influences in him who is a full fountain.

4. Jesus Christ took on him the guilt of all the elect's sins, and the curse due unto them; and these sins of theirs did hang about him till they brought him to the dust of death. But the sufferings of Christ being satisfactory, as he died for sin, so he died to sin, Rom. 6:10 that is, he was absolutely freed from those sins of the elect wherewith he had burdened himself. This he did and suffered as a public person; and therefore the apostle tells us, Rom. 6:6 that 'our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.' For the guilt of sin and the curse being taken away, sanctification follows of course; that being removed which prevented sanctifying influences, and a communication opened betwixt heaven and the soul again, upon its reconciliation with God.

5. Though by the death and resurrection of Christ, the sanctification of his people is infallibly insured, as the corruption of all mankind was by the fall of Adam; yet we cannot actually partake of Christ's

holiness till we have a spiritual being in him, even as we partake not of Adam's corruption till we have a natural being from him. And for the effecting of this union with Christ, he in the time of love sends his quickening Spirit into the soul, whereby he apprehends us; and thus there is a passive reception of Christ. And the soul being quickened, believes, and so apprehends Christ. Thus that union with Christ is made up by the Spirit on Christ's part, and faith on ours. So the soul being united to him, lives by the same spirit of holiness which is in him, and takes of his, and gives to his members for their sanctification.

6. Lastly, As Jesus Christ is the prime receptacle of the Spirit of holiness, as the head of all the saints; so the continual supplies of that Spirit are to be derived from him for the saints' progress in holiness, till they come to perfection. And faith is the great mean of communication betwixt Christ and us, Acts 15:9. And thus it does, as it empties the soul of all confidence in itself for sanctification, and relies upon him for it according to his word: putting on the saints to use the means of sanctification appointed by him, yet taking their confidence off the means, and setting it on himself, Phil. 3:3. And for the ground of this confidence it has his word, so that his honour and faithfulness are engaged for the supply of the Spirit of sanctification this way, being the way in which he has commanded us to look for it.

USE I. Of information. This lets us see,

1. The absolute necessity of holiness. When God, in the depth of infinite wisdom, laid his measures for the salvation of sinners, he had their sanctification in his eye, to bring it about by the death of his own Son. A certain evidence that there is no salvation without it. Nay, it is a principal part of our salvation, Matth. 1:21. There is more evil in sin than suffering, more in man's sin than the wrath of God. Nay, suppose a man saved from wrath, but not from sin, he is a miserable man; because of his unlikeness to God; for as happiness lies in assimilation to God, it must needs be a miserable case to be so unlike him as sin makes us.

2. In vain do men attempt sanctification without coming to Christ for it. Those that know not Christ may attain to a shadow of holiness, but can never be truly sanctified. And those that hear the gospel, but neglect the great duty of believing and uniting with Christ, can do no duty aright, their obedience at best is but a hypocritical obedience, Tit. 1:15, 16.

3. Unholiness ought not to stop a sinner from coming to Christ, more than a disease ought to hinder a man to take the physician's help, or cold from taking the benefit of the fire. And they that will have men to attain to holiness before they believe, are as absurd as one who would have the cripple to walk before he use the cure for his lameness.

4. True faith is the soul's coming to Christ for sanctification as well as justification. For faith must receive Christ as God offers him, and he offers him with all his salvation. Now, he is made sanctification: Wherefore the soul, being willing to take Christ with all his salvation, to be sanctified, comes to him for it.

USE II. Of Exhortation. Come then to Christ for sanctification.

To press this, I offer the following motives.

Mot. 1. If ye be not holy, ye will never see heaven.—Heaven's door is bolted on the unholy, Heb. 12:14.—There is another place provided for the unholy impure goats.

Mot. 2. Ye will never attain holiness, if ye come not to Christ for it. How can ye think to thrive following another device than God's for your end? Ye may do what ye can to reform, ye may bind yourselves with vows to be holy, watch against sin, and press your hearts with the most affecting considerations of heaven, hell, &c. but ye shall as soon bring water out of the flinty rock, as holiness out of all these, till ye believe and unite with Christ. Consider,

1. While ye are out of Christ, ye are under the curse; and is it possible for the cursed tree to bring forth the fruit of holiness?

2. Can ye be holy without sanctifying influences, or can ye expect that these shall be conveyed to you otherwise than through a Mediator, by his Spirit?

3. Ye have nothing wherewith to produce holiness. The most skilful musician cannot play unless his instrument be in tune. The lame man, if he were ever so willing, cannot run till he be cured. Ye are under an utter impotency, by reason of the corruption of your nature.

Lastly, If ye will come to Christ, ye shall be made holy. There is a fulness of merit and spirit in him for sanctification. Come then to the fountain of holiness. The worst of sinners may be sanctified this way, 1 Cor. 6:11.

Wherefore be persuaded of your utter inability to sanctify yourselves, and receive Christ for sanctification, as he is offered to you; and thus alone shall you attain to holiness both in heart and life.

OF THE BENEFITS FLOWING FROM JUSTIFICATION, ADOPTION, AND SANCTIFICATION

ROM. 5:1, 2.—Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

THERE are three sorts of benefits belonging to the justified, adopted, and sanctified. (1.) Some in this life they partake of. (2.) Some at death. (3.) Some at the resurrection. As for those in this life, we are

told what they are in that question, 'What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification? Ans. Assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.' These are divided into two sorts. (1.) Some that flow from the sense of our justification, &c. (2.) Some from the being of it. Of the former, the Catechism takes notice of three, viz. assurance, peace, joy. All which are held out in the text as benefits coming through justification. Here observe,

1. Justification as a spring of other benefits. It is a leading mercy, it brings many others along with it. In it guilt is removed; and that being removed, a stream of mercies flows from heaven into the soul.

2. The benefits flowing from it.

(1.) Peace with God, or towards God; i. e. not only reconciliation with God, the cause of the quarrel being taken away; but peace of conscience, peace within, when we look towards God, arising from the sense of our justification and reconciliation. But all this is owing to Christ, who brought us into the state of reconciliation, called this grace wherein we stand.

(2.) Assurance of eternal happiness: Rejoice in hope of the glory of God; i. e. in the glory of God we hope for. They are so sure of that happiness, that they rejoice in the view of it, as if they were actually carried into it. And assurance of God's love, ver. 5.

(3.) Spiritual joy: We rejoice in hope of the glory of God; that is, We glory or joy in the Lord, upon this hope.

The text evidently affords this doctrine, viz.

DOCT. 'Assurance, spiritual peace, and joy, are benefits flowing from a state of justification.'

I. OF ASSURANCE

In speaking to the first, namely, assurance, I will shew,

I. The kinds of it.

II. That a child of God may have this assurance.

III. The nature of it, and how a saint comes to be assured.

IV. The fruits of it, whereby it may be discerned from presumption.

V. The necessity of it.

VI. Deduce an inference or two.

I. I am to shew the kinds of assurance. They are two.

1. Objective assurance, whereby the special love of God to a saint, and his eternal salvation, are sure in themselves, 2 Tim. 2:19. 'The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.'—This is never wanting, whether the the child of God know it or not. Though they raze foundations of hope at some times, yet God never razes his.

2. Subjective assurance, whereby a child of God is assured that God loves him with a special love, and that he shall certainly partake of eternal glory, Gal. 2:20. 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me,' says Paul. This is not a wavering hope, or conjecture, but an infallible certainty. This is the assurance we treat of.

II. I shall shew that a child of God may have this assurance.

1. A believer may know that he has relative grace, that he is justified and therefore shall never come into condemnation, Rom. 5:1, &c. Though he cannot ascend to heaven, and at first read his name in the book of God's decrees; yet by comparing the book of God and the

book of his own soul, he may know that he is called and elected, 2 Pet. 1:10 and therefore shall certainly be saved.

2. He may be assured that he has inherent grace, that he believes as sure as he breathes, 2 Tim. 1:12 that he has love to the Lord unfeigned, and can appeal to Omniscience on the head, John 21:15 as Peter did when he said, 'Thou who knowest all things, knowest that I love thee.' And believing that such are loved of God, and shall certainly persevere, for which he has the testimony of the word, he may be assured that he is the happy man.

3. It is the office of the Spirit of God to assure believers of this. He has given us the word for this end: He is given to lead his people into all truth, particularly to discover the grace of God to them, and in them, 1 Cor. 2:12 to witness with their spirits to their adoption, Rom. 8:16 to be a seal, which is properly to ensure an evidence, Eph. 4:30 and an earnest, a part of the price and pledge, of the whole, 2 Cor. 5:5.

Lastly, Many of the saints have attained it; as Job, chap. 19:25. 'For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth,' Psal. 23 ult. 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever,' 2 Tim. 4:8. 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.' And others too, besides scripture-saints.

III. I shall shew the nature of this assurance, and how a saint comes to be assured. By what is said, ye may perceive that this is a work of the Spirit, in the hearts of the saints, without whose efficacy no man can attain it. We may take it up in these three things.

1. The Spirit shining on his own word, particularly the promises, in the Bible, the child of God firmly believes them, Heb. 6:11, 12. The Lord has testified in his word, that such and such persons, for

instance, that love him, Prov. 8:17 are universal in obedience; are poor in spirit, Matt. 5:3 are beloved of him, and shall certainly be saved. The Spirit says in effect, by the light he gives the believer into the divine authority of that word, This is my word. And as such the child of God is firmly persuaded of the certainty of it, as if a voice from the throne of God would make these promises and declarations. This is the ground-work of assurance.

2. The Spirit shining on his own work of grace in the believer's heart, the believer discerns it, 1 Cor. 2:12. The Spirit of God clears up to the man the truth of grace in him; lets him see that he, for instance, loves God, &c. and so says in effect, This is my work. Hence he is enabled to conclude assuredly, that the Lord loves him, he shall not be ashamed, and that the kingdom of God is his. This assurance is stronger or weaker according to the degree of light that shines upon the work of grace in the heart to discover it.

3. Lastly, The Spirit of the Lord sometimes gives a joint testimony with the spirits of the saints, to the truth of that conclusion, Rom. 8:16 that they are the children of God. The testimony of the believer's own spirit is weak in itself, and Satan can find many ways to invalidate it; therefore the Spirit witnesses to them the truth of the conclusion, whereby they are raised to a full persuasion of it.

IV. I shall shew the fruit of this assurance, whereby it may be discerned from presumption.

1. It inflames the soul with love to the Lord. As one flame begets another, so the assurance of God's love to us will add new vigour to our love to the Lord, 1 John 4:19. Luke 7:47. He sits in the warm sunshine, that cannot fail to melt the heart, who sits under evidence of the Lord's love.

2. It is humbling, Gal. 2:20. None so vile in their own eyes as those who are lifted up in the manifestations of the Lord's love to them,

Gen. 18:27. 2 Sam. 7:18. 2 Cor. 12:4 and 11 compared. Delusion puffs up, but true assurance humbles.

3. It makes one tender in heart and life, and is a most powerful motive to sanctification, 2 Cor. 7:1. It is followed with great care to please God in all things, and watchfulness against every sin. While the empty traveller walks at random, fearing nothing, because he has nothing to lose, he that has precious things about him looks well to himself, Cant. 3:5. One may be persuaded, that the confidence which makes not one tender in his duty to God and man, is presumption.

4. Establishment in the good ways of the Lord, 2 Pet. 1:10. Faith is the provisor of all other graces, it brings in oil into the lamp; and the more evidence it has, it can do its office the better. A doubting Christian will be a staggering and weak Christian; as the soldier who has little hope of the victory will readily be fainthearted, while he that is assured is strengthened and established.

5. Lastly, It fills a man with contempt of the world, Gal. 6:14. If ye gaze on the shining sun, for a while after ye will scarcely discern the beauty of the earth. And one's solacing himself in contemplation of heaven as his, will sink the value of the world with him.

V. I shall shew the necessity of assurance.

1. It is not necessary to the being of a Christian. One may have true faith, and yet want full assurance, Isa. 50:50:10. One may go to heaven in a mist, not knowing whither he is going. We read of some, Heb. 2:15, 'who through fear of death are all their life time subject to bondage.' Our salvation depends on our state, not our knowledge of it.

2. It is necessary to the well-being of a Christian, and therefore we are commanded to seek it, 2 Pet. 1:10, 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.' There are none who can live so comfortably for themselves, as the assured Christian, and none are so useful for God as they. It fits a man either to live or die; while

others are unfit to live, because of the weakness of grace in a throng of trials and temptations, and unfit to die for want of evidence of grace.

Hence it follows, that assurance may be lost; and they that sometimes have this light, may fall into darkness. And it is careless walking that puts it out, especially sinning against the light, whereby the Spirit is grieved, and withdraws his light, Eph. 4:29, 30. But if it be lost that way, and darkness come on, it will readily be dreadful darkness; the higher they have been lifted up, the lower readily they are laid, Psal. 51:8.

Inf. 1. Unjustified and unsanctified persons can have no true assurance of the Lord's love to them. They may have a false confidence, a delusive hope of heaven; but no assurance, for that is peculiar to the justified.

Inf. 2. Doubts and fears are no friends to holiness of heart and life. It is little faith that breeds them in the hearts of the people of God, Matth. 14:31. And little faith will always make little holiness.

Inf. 3. Lastly, Christians may thank themselves for the uncomfortable lives they lead. What sovereignty may do, we know not: but surely it is sloth and unbelief that the want of assurance is ordinarily owing to. Stir up yourselves then to seek it. Be frequent in self-examination, cry to the Lord for the witness of his spirit. Believe the word, and be habitually tender in your walk, if ever ye would have assurance, Psal. 5 ult.

II. OF PEACE OF CONSCIENCE

'PEACE of conscience is a benefit flowing from justification'

Here I shall shew,

I. What peace of conscience is.

II. The excellency of it.

III. How it is obtained.

IV. How it is maintained.

V. How it is distinguished from false peace.

VI. Lastly, Deduce an inference or two.

I. I am to shew what peace of conscience is. It is a blessed inward calmness and consolation arising from the purging of the conscience from guilt before the Lord, in which description, observe these two things.

1. The subject of this peace. It is a purged conscience, Heb. 9:14. Peace and purity go together, and make a good conscience, 1 Tim. 1:5. That peace which is joined with impurity, in an unpurged conscience, is but carnal security, peace in a dream, which will end in a fearful surprise. Now, there are two things necessary to the purging of conscience.

(1.) Removal of guilt, in pardon thereof, which brings the sinner into a state of peace with God, Psalm 32:1. Guilt, felt or unfelt, is a band on the soul binding it over to God's wrath; it is a disease in the conscience, which will make it a sick conscience at length. But a pardon takes away guilt, looses the band, removes the deadly force of the disease, and lays a foundation for carrying off the sickness, Isa. 33 ult.

(2.) Removal of the conscience of guilt, in the sense of pardon, Heb. 10:2. Though a malefactor's pardon be passed the seals, and he is secured from death, yet till he know it he cannot have peace. So the pardoned sinner, who knows not his mercy, though he has peace with God, yet wants peace of conscience. Psalm 51:8. So the conscience is purged, when the sting of felt guilt is drawn out of it.

2. The parts of this peace. These are two.

(1.) An inward calm of the soul, and quietness of the mind, wherein it is not disturbed with the fears of God's wrath, nor frightened with the judgments which its sins do in themselves deserve, Prov. 1:33. A troubled conscience is full of fears, of terrible forebodings, and of torments, 1 John 4:18. When peace enters the conscience, the mists clear up, the fears are scattered, and conscience has a serenity and quiet within itself.

(2.) Consolation and comfort of heart, 2 Cor. 1:12; Isa. 57:19. Peace of conscience is not a mere negative, or indisturbance, which sloth and negligence of soul-matters may procure to the unpardoned: but it is an active cheerfulness of spirit, in the soul's looking up towards God, and reflecting how matters stand betwixt heaven and it, Col. 3:15.

Conceive the whole thus: Sin entering into the soul, casts the conscience into a fever, and guilt makes it rage. The great Physician gives the proper remedy: and so the conscience gets a cool, the sickness is removed, and the man gathers health, strength, and soundness, Job 33:22–26; Heb. 9:14.

II. I shall shew the excellency of it. It is Abraham's bosom on this side of heaven, the lower paradise; it is like the shore to the shipwrecked soul; and life from the dead. I will only say three things of it.

1. It is the wine-press of the grapes of heaven, that squeezeth out into the man's mouth the sap of the covenant, Psal. 119:102, 103. It was a sad tale of the good Asaph's, Psal. 77:3. 'I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.' Peace of conscience makes a man remember God, and be comforted; to suck the sap of promises, and all the declarations of God's love and favour in his word, as the same Asaph did, Psalm 73:24, 25, 26.

2. It is sap and poison to all earthly comforts, Prov. 15:15. A sick man can take no pleasure in the comforts of life, as a healthy man does.

An uneasy conscience sucks the sap out of all. But peace there, makes coarse fare, and little of it, very sweet, Prov. 17:1. And whatever a man has, it puts an additional sweetness into it.

3. It is sweet sauce to all afflictions, 2 Cor. 1:12. John 16:23. When there is no peace within, little things make people fretful: even a scratch of a pin is a wound with a sword. But this makes a man easy in the midst of the little annoyances of the world, though they be great in themselves, Col. 3:15. Phil. 4:7. Compare Heb. 10:34. When a man meets with disquietments and vexations abroad, he is helped to bear all, when he is comforted and cheered coming into his own house. But heavy is their case, who come from bitterness abroad, and are met with bitterness at home. The former is an emblem of peace of conscience, the latter an emblem of the soul in afflictions.

III. I am to shew how this peace of conscience is obtained. This peace is peculiar to the saints. Others may have false peace, Luke 11:21 but they only have, or can have, true peace, Rom. 5:1.

1. It is obtained for them by Jesus Christ dying and suffering to procure it, Isa. 53:5. Eph. 2:4. There can be none of this peace without reconciliation with God, and there can be no reconciliation without his blood. The convinced sinners could have no more inward peace than devils have, if Christ had not died to procure it; but their wound had been incurable, and stood open and gaping for ever.

2. It is obtained by them, by these two methods.

(1). By a believing application of the blood of Christ, Rom. 5:13. Job 33:23, &c. This is the only medicine that can draw the thorn of guilt out of the conscience, and heal its wounds, 1 John 1:7. Medicines prepared by men may cure bodily distempers, and a vitiated fancy, or disordered imagination, among other things. Confessing, mourning, reforming, watching, &c. may give a palliative cure even to the conscience, scurrying over its sores. But nothing but a believing

application of Christ's blood will give true peace of conscience; and do what ye will, if ye do not that, ye will never get true peace, Isa. 7:9.

(2.) By God's speaking peace thereupon to the soul, Isa. 57:19. The soul resting on Christ by faith, brings it into a state of peace with God; but for peace of conscience, more is required, namely, a sense of that peace. And this none but God can give, Psal. 51:8. He speaks peace in the word; but a work of the Spirit on the conscience is necessary to make the application, as appears from 2 Sam. 12:13 compared with Psal. 51. And this is a light struck up in the soul, discovering the soul to be at peace with God, an overpowering light that silences doubts and fears, and creates a blessed calm. This also is obtained in the way of believing, in the reflex act of faith.

IV. I shall shew how this peace is maintained. The apostle tells us it was his exercise to maintain it, Acts 24:16. And if we be not exercised in it, it will soon be lost. Now, it is maintained by,

1. Keeping up a firm and settled purpose of heart to follow the way of duty, and to stand aloof from sin, cost what it will, Acts 11:23. David kept up his peace that way, Psalm 17:3. This is the breast-plate of righteousness, Eph. 6:14 the which if it fall by, one may quickly be wounded to the heart. Unsettledness of heart, one's being at every turn unresolved what to do, cannot miss to leave him in the mire.

2. Living a life of dependence on the Lord, for light of life, direction and through-bearing, Prov. 3:6. Gal. 2:20. And this will keep a man from presumption, and doing any thing with a doubting conscience, which will soon mar one's peace.

3. Watchfulness against sin, snares and temptations, 1 Cor. 10:12. One that would maintain his peace, must be upon his guard, otherwise it will soon be disturbed, in this evil world.

4. A strict, holy, gospel-walk, in all known duties, towards God and towards man, Gal. 6:16. He that will adventure to balk any of them, shall soon lose it.

5. Lastly, Frequent renewing our faith and repentance, for purging away the sins we fall into, 1 Pet. 2:4.

V. I proceed to shew how peace of conscience is distinguished from false peace. A godly man may have a false peace. Cant. 5:2. Such had David before Nathan came to him after his fall. An unregenerate man can have no peace but what is false, Isa. 57 ult.

1. True peace, built on the ground of God's word, is established by the word, however searching; the other is weakened by it. For God's word is a friend to God's peace, but an enemy to delusion, 1 John 3:20, 21. But this is meant of God's word rightly understood, (if we misunderstand it, it is not his word, but our own mistake); and such mistakes may have the quite contrary effect.

2. True peace cannot be maintained but by a holy tenderness, and constant struggle against sin: but false peace is maintained without it, 1 John 3:3.

Inf. 1. The unconverted sinner, and the untender Christian too, are in a very unfit case for the time of calamity, Isa. 57:20, 21. Matth. 25:5. Only the man that has peace of conscience is prepared, Isa. 33:14, 15.

2. Let all who would have their consciences to be their friends, flee to the blood of Christ, and to lead a holy life.

3. Lastly, Let all those who want it, labour to get it; and they that have it, be exercised to keep it.

III. OF JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST

'Spiritual joy, or joy in the Holy Ghost, is a benefit flowing from justification'

Now, to shew first of all what spiritual joy is: Joy in general is a pleasing passion, arising from the enjoyment, or hope of the

enjoyment of a desired object. Spiritual joy is a joy arising from the enjoyment, and hope of the enjoyment of spiritual blessings.

Here I shall shew,

I. The subjects of this joy, who they are that partake of it.

II. The objects of it, or what they joy in.

III. The grounds of it.

IV. The Author of it.

V. The means the Spirit makes use of to convey it into the hearts of the saints.

VI. The difference betwixt it and the hypocrite's joy.

VII. Lastly, Apply.

I. I shall consider the subjects of this joy, who they are that partake of it.

1. It is peculiar to the saints: for they only are blessed with spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, and no others can have true spiritual joy, Phil. 3:3. Any may have a sensitive joy, viz. in things grateful to their senses, Acts 14:17. Profane men may have a sinful joy, a joy in sin, Prov. 15:21. Hypocrites may have a delusive joy, which is a carnal joy in spiritual things, Matth. 13:20. But saints only have the true spiritual joy, or joy in the Holy Ghost; for it is peculiar to the subjects of Christ's kingdom, Rom. 14:17.

2. Yet the saints have it not at all times, Psal. 51:8. A child of God may be walking in darkness, going mourning without the sun, having no evidence of his interest in Christ: in such a case he cannot have this joy. It is true, there is a seed of joy, in the most bitter sorrows of a spirit, which will spring up in due time, Psalm 97:11. But it seems it

may be the case with some of the saints, never to have that joy till they get it in heaven, though I judge it is very rare, especially under the New Testament dispensation, Heb. 2:15.

II. I shall shew the objects of this joy, what they joy in.

1. The principal object is God in Christ, Phil. 3:3. Rom. 5:11. They look to and remember God in Christ, and joy in him. God out of Christ is a most terrible object, Heb. 12 ult. 'Our God is a consuming fire.' And a sinner can never truly rejoice in an absolute God. But God in Christ, reconciled to the soul, breathing out peace and love to the sinner through a crucified Redeemer, is the chief and fundamental, the comprehensive object of his joy.

2. The less principal, or secondary object, is twofold.

(1.) The precious spiritual privileges they have in hand, which they enjoy for the present in this life, as justification, adoption, sanctification, peace with God, peace of conscience, access to God and communion with him, &c. In these they justly joy, Isa. 61:10. Will a man rejoice in the favour of his prince? Surely then a saint may well rejoice in the favour of his God.

(2.) The precious privileges they have in hope, Rom. 5:2. 'Rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' They have heaven and the eternal weight of glory in view: and this hope makes them sing the triumph before the victory. Yet are they not rash and foolish; for it is a sure hope, and will never make one ashamed. One counts his riches, not only by what he has in hand, but what he has in bills and bonds, and joys in the latter as well as the former.

III. I shall consider the grounds of this joy in these things. They are twofold.

1. A suitableness of the objects to the heart and mind of the child of God. These objects are the great desire of a believer, 2 Sam. 23:5. So the receiving of them in hand, or in hope, makes him to joy, Psal. 4:6,

7. Without this there can be no joy, Prov. 13:12. 'When the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.' If ye would make a starving man rejoice, you must give him meat; if a condemned man, a pardon. Holiness and communion with God are sapless to the unrenewed man. God himself is not the object of his desire: neither is the holiness of heaven suited to his mind: therefore he cannot rejoice in these. But it is otherwise with the saints; so strangers intermeddle not with their joy.

2. A sense of an interest in these objects, John 20:28. 'My Lord, and my God.' One has more joy in his own cottage, than in another's palace, because he can say, It is my cottage. Hagar could not rejoice in the well of water, till the Lord opened her eyes to see it. Though a pardon were slipt unawares into a man's pocket, he cannot joy in it till he knows he has it. So a sense of our interest is necessary to spiritual joy.

IV. I shall next consider the Author of this joy. The Holy Spirit of God is the author of it, and therefore it is called 'joy in the Holy Ghost,' Rom. 14:17 i. e. wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost, shedding abroad the love of God, in the sense thereof, like a sweet-smelling ointment in the heart of the saint. It is he that administers the reviving cordial to the fainting soul, draws off the saints' sackcloth, and girds him with this gladness.

V. I come now to consider the means which the Spirit makes use of to convey this joy into the hearts of the saints. These are twofold.

1. External means are the word and sacraments. These are the wells of salvation to the people of God, Isa. 12:3.

(1.) The word of God which brings the glad tidings of salvation from heaven to poor sinners; it discovers the enriching treasure to the soul, Psal. 119:162. 'I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.' And no earthly treasure will raise such a joy in one's heart, as a

word of promise will do, when the Spirit of the Lord shines on it unto a soul.

(2.) The sacraments, which seal and confirm the word of grace to the soul. This is plain from the exercise of the eunuch, Acts 8:39 who, when he was baptised, went on his way rejoicing; and of thousands who have met with that joy at sealing ordinances, which they never could find in all earthly things; and no wonder, for then is the great seal of heaven set unto the covenant betwixt the Lord and his people.

2. The internal mean is faith, Rom. 15:13. 'The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.' 1 Pet. 1:8.—'Believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' Faith receives and applies the glad tidings brought by the word, and confirmed by the sacraments. The Spirit of the Lord works faith at first and excites and strengthens it: and so the peace which the Lord speaks to his people is firmly believed by the saint, and thus his heart is filled with joy.

VI. I come now to shew the difference betwixt this joy and the joy of the hypocrite. That a hypocrite may have a joy in spiritual things, is evident from Matth. 13:20 and it is confirmed by the case of many deluded souls, who may have their joys, as well as sorrows which are unsound as well as themselves.

1. True spiritual joy riseth in the heart, ordinarily after the word has had a precedent effect on the heart, to rend it for sin, and from it, Psal. 126:5. 'They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy.' Matth. 5:4. 'Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.' But delusive joy springs up more quickly, while yet the heart is not rent for sin, at least not from it, Matth. 13:20. Compare Jer. 4:3. Much pains the husbandman is at ere he can expect a crop; but Weeds will grow up without pain or labour for them.

2. True spiritual joy comes by the word, and that rightly understood; but delusive joy comes either without the word, or by misunderstanding of the word. The channel of divine

communications is the word of God, Isa. 59:21. That joy which comes by pretended revelation, dreams, or impressions, without the word, and regard to it, is most likely to be the effect of a heated fancy; and people had need to beware of being beguiled with these things. The written word is particularly the channel of spiritual joy, 1 John 1:4. 'These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.' And if an angel from heaven would speak joy to one whom the written word does not give ground of joy to, it would be but a deceit, Isa. 8:20. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.'

3. True spiritual joy is lasting; but delusive joy vanishes away, and comes to nothing, as wanting a root, Matth. 13:20, 21. It has a season, and when that is over it is extinguished, John 5:35. 'Ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.' I own a child of God may lose his joy too; but here lies the difference. The ground of the believer's joy, sense of interest, is sometimes removed out of his sight, and so he must needs lose his joy. But though the ground of the hypocrite's joy continue, namely his fancied interest in the favour of God, and privileges of the gospel, yet the joy goes: those things grow stale and sapless with him, which mightily affected him when they were new to him.

4. True spiritual joy humbles the soul, and fills it with high and honourable thoughts of God; but delusion never ceases to puff up, Gen. 28:17. 'How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' Exod. 34:8. 'Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.' 2 Cor. 12:11. Compare Col. 2:18. For all the divine communications tend to empty men of themselves, to make Christ and his free grace all to a man; and holy familiarity with God impresses an awe on one's spirit, in so far as the more one sees of God, the more he must admire and adore him. But nature will always build up nature.

5. Lastly, True spiritual joy is sanctifying, makes one the more tender and holy, the more he has of it. But delusion will never sanctify, Phil.

3:3. Delusion is a cover to and nourisher of inward lusts, which get a peaceable shelter under it: but true spiritual joy makes one forward in the duties of universal obedience, Psal. 119:32. 'I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.' And it makes one tender in moral duties towards God, and towards man.

Inf. 1. Unjustified persons cannot intermeddle with this joy, for it is a benefit that flows from justification. It is a privilege peculiar to the saints; children's bread that is not cast to the dogs. Ye may rejoice in the worldly comforts ye have, saying, This clothing, this money is mine; but you cannot say, This God is mine.

2. When created streams are dried up, the joy of the ungodly is quite gone: but it is not so with the godly, Job 6:13. 'Is not my help in me? and is wisdom driven quite from me?' Hab. 3:17, 18. The great ground of the saints' joy, and the objects of it, are beyond the reach of men, so that they cannot take them from them.

3. Most groundless is the prejudice against religion, that it is a melancholy thing, Prov. 3:17. 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.' None have such reason to rejoice as the believer has. If the poor wretched and condemned creature has more ground to rejoice than he that is pardoned and enriched with his prince's favour, then the wicked has as much ground to rejoice as the believer who is justified by grace. O! if the ungodly saw their state, they would never rejoice; and if the godly saw theirs, they would never despond.

4. It is not God's allowance for his children to harden themselves in sorrow, and refuse to be comforted, Phil. 4:4. 'Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.' As it is uncomfortable to themselves, it is dishonouring to God, and is the fruit of unbelief.

5. O, unconverted sinners, let the joy of religion draw you to it. Come to Christ, in a way of believing on him, that ye may be justified. Close

with the way of holiness, in renouncing all known sin, and complying with all known duty, that ye may have this spiritual joy, 2 Cor. 1:12.

6. Lastly, Let the godly strive to attain this spiritual joy, and to maintain it for God's honour, and their own comfort and usefulness.

OF INCREASE OF GRACE, AND PERSEVERANCE THEREIN TO THE END

PROV. 4:18.—But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day

HITHERTO we have spoken of the benefits flowing from or accompanying the sense of justification. I come now to speak of those that accompany or flow from the being of it, namely, increase of grace, and perseverance. In the text there is an elegant comparison of two things like to one another. Wherein we have,

1. The subjects of comparison, the path of the just, and the shining light.

(1.) The subject compared, the path of the just. The just, in the language of the Old Testament, are those who are justified by faith, Hab. 2:4. 'The just shall live by his faith.' They are a travelling company going towards Canaan; they have a path or way wherein they go, and they make progress in it. The word here used signifies, (1.) The progress itself, or course in the way, as Job 6:18. 'The paths of the way are turned aside.' Isa. 26:8. 'In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee.' (2.) The place or way through which one goes. The thing meant is the gracious and holy life of the just.

(2.) The subject it is compared to, the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. It is compared to light, both because it is comfortable to themselves, and instructing, exciting to others, and honourable. It is not like the light of a meteor, that shines a while, and then disappears quickly, nor that of a candle, which burns and burns down till it wastes itself; but like the light of the sun, and not the evening-sun, that declineth, but the morning-sun, that with increasing brightness and heat advances to the meridian.

2. The points of the comparison. (1.) As that light is a growing light shining more and more; so is the grace of God in a soul, going from one degree to another. (2.) As it does not go out, but grows on to the perfect day; so grace never dies out, but goes on till it be perfected in glory.

DOCT. 'Increase of grace, and perseverance, are benefits flowing from or accompanying justification.'

I. OF INCREASE OR GROWTH OF GRACE

Here I shall shew,

1. That real grace doth increase or grow.
2. How a Christian grows in grace.
3. The causes of this growth.
4. The difference betwixt true and false growth.
5. Whether true grace grows always.
6. Apply.

FIRST, I am to shew that real grace doth increase or grow. This is evident from three things.

1. Scripture-testimony. Grace is a holy seed that springs and grows, Mark 4:27: however little at first, like a grain of mustard seed, Matth. 13:31, 32; like leaven, ver. 33. God has promised it, Psal. 92:12. Mal. 4:2. 'But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall.'

2. God has appointed a certain stature that his children shall grow to, Eph. 4:13. This is the perfection of grace. Hence the Christian is first a little child, then a young man, then a father, 1 John 2:13. They walk, they run, they fly, they mount like eagles, Isa. 40 ult.

3. This is the end of divine influences, Isa. 27:3 and 44:3, 4. It is also the effect of divine ordinances, Eph. 4:11, 12. It is the end of all the pains of the heavenly Husbandman on the plants of his vineyard.

SECONDLY, I shall shew how a Christian grows in grace. He grows four ways.

1. Inward, into Christ, as the branch doth into the stock, Eph. 4:15. Cleaving to him, and knitting with him more firmly, his faith grows stronger, 2 These. 1:9; his love more vigorous, his hope firmer, his dependence closer, &c. This is the spring of all other Christian increase in grace.

2. Outward, in good works, in all the parts of a holy life, piety towards God, and righteousness towards men, Gen. 49:22. The growing Christian advances in the work of his salvation, Phil. 2:12; in the work of his regeneration, Acts 13:36. He goes on in the fruits of a holy life, for God's honour, his own good, and for the good and advantage of his fellow Christians, knowing that he is not born for himself.

3. Upward, in a heavenly disposition, Phil. 3:20. The end of his journey that he is aiming at is the upper world; and as he is coming out of this world, in action so is he coming out of it in affection, Cant.

8:5. He grows more heavenly in his desires, joys, delights, griefs, sorrows, &c.

4. Lastly, Downward in humility, self-denial, self-loathing, resignation to the will of the Lord, &c. The more religion prevails, there are always more of these graces, Job 42:5, 6. Psal. 22:6. 2 Cor. 12:11. For the more grace there is, there is the more knowledge of God and of one's self; which are two boundless depths, the one of glory, the other of sin.

THIRDLY, I shall shew the causes of this growth.

1. Union with Christ. John 15:4. 'As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine: no more can ye, except ye abide in me.' He that is not united to Christ can never grow in grace, more than a branch that does not knit with the stock. But where the Lord takes hold of the soul by his Spirit, and the soul takes hold of Christ by faith, there is an union whereby they become members of Christ, and their growth is secured.

2. Communion with Christ, John 6:57. 'He that eateth me, oven he shall live by me.' He is the fountain of the saints life, who gives it them, and more abundantly. He is he head of influences, by which they are made to increase in grace, as the sap from the root and stock makes the branches to grow. And this communion they have with him.

(1.) In ordinances, public, private, and secret, so that they are made to grow by the fatness of his house, Psal. 92:13. 'Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God.' The word edifies them, Isa. 55:10, 11. The sacraments strengthen and confirm them, as they did the eunuch, who went on his way rejoicing, Acts 8:39. Prayer and other holy exercises profit them, to their spiritual increase. But all by the influences of his Spirit in them, Isa. 44:3, 4.

(2.) In providences. Mercies are blessed to them for this end, Isa. 66:11, 12 crosses, John 15:2. 'Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.' And often have the people of God grown most under the weight of afflictions. But this also is by communion with Christ in them, Phil. 1:19. I know that this shall turn to my salvation—through the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.'

FOURTHLY, I proceed to shew the difference betwixt true and false growth. As hypocrites may have seeming grace, though not real, so that seeming grace may grow, Mat. 13:5. There is a twofold difference.

1. True Christian growth is universal, Eph. 4:15. False growth is only in some particular things. The true Christian grows in all the parts of spiritual life proportionably; for all the graces of the Spirit are linked together, so that when one grows, they all grow. Such a difference there is betwixt them as betwixt a well thriving child and a rickety one. The former grows proportionably in all the parts, the body, legs, arms, &c. The other grows too, but grows not so; the head grows big, but the body grows not. So the hypocrite may get more knowledge, but no more tenderness, holiness, &c. He is not outwardly, but inwardly cold, as to the life of religion.

2. The hypocrite soon comes to a stand, the Christian goes on to perfection, Luke 8:14. Phil. 3:13, 14. They have their measure; and when they have come to that, they stand like the door on the hinges; but the true Christian is going on, labouring to be holy as God is holy, 1 John 3:3. 'Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.'

FIFTHLY, I am to shew, whether true grace grows always.

1. It does not always grow, nor at every particular season. It has its winters and decays, as well as its spring and growing times, Rev. 2:4.

'I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.'
Yet,

2. It never decays utterly, 1 John 3:9. 'Whosoever is born of God, his seed remaineth in him.' The flame of it may go out, but there is always a live-coal left, though under the ashes, which the influences of the Spirit will blow up again. It will not always be winter, Hos. 14:7. 'They that dwell under his shadow shall return, they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine.'

3. A Christian may be growing, and yet not be sensible of it. If one judge of his case by present feeling, he may be mistaken, Mark 4:27. If one fix his eyes on the sun, or a tree, he cannot perceive the one moving, or the other growing. But compare the tree with what it was some years ago, the place where the sun now is, with where it was in the morning; so shall ye know the remarkable difference. And the very same difference may be observed in the growth of a Christian.

Again, the growth is not to be measured only by the top, but by the root too. If a tree be taking with the ground, and spreading its roots there, it is surely growing. And though Christians may want the consolations and flashes of affections they sometimes had; yet if they be growing in tenderness, humility, self-denial, &c. it is true Christian growth.

Inf. 1. This may cause fear and trembling to,

1. Apostates, who instead of growing are gone back to their former courses of profaneness and impiety. Fallen stars were never stars but in appearance, and fearful will be their doom, Heb. 10:38. 'If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.'

2. Those who are at a stand in the way of religion. They have come up to a form of godliness, and they are like the door on the hinges. They are not striving to be forward in mortification.

3. Those who are growing worse instead of growing better. They are like dead trees; summer and winter is alike to them; they are never the better for all the warnings from the Lord's word or providence: but whatever God says by providences or ordinances, they go on their own way, adding one sinful step to another.

Inf. 2. Improve ordinances for spiritual growth. O! it is sad to be sitting under means of grace, but never growing. This is the ready way to provoke the Lord to remove ordinances.

Inf. 3. Let the least spark of true grace be nourished, for it will grow, Isa. 42:3.

Inf. 4. Lastly, Labour to be growing Christians.

II. OF PERSEVERANCE IN GRACE

'Perseverance in grace is another benefit flowing from, or accompanying justification'

Here I shall shew,

1. What this perseverance is.
2. How it is to be understood.
3. That the saints shall persevere to the end.
4. What are those things which make hypocrites fall away, but over the belly of which saints persevere.
5. The grounds of the perseverance of the saints.
6. The means of perseverance.
7. Lastly, Apply.

FIRST, I shall shew what this perseverance is. To persevere is, to continue and abide in a state into which one is brought. And this perseverance is a firm and constant continuance in the state of grace, even to the end of one's life, Matth. 10:22. Col. 1:23. It is opposed to total apostasy, and utter falling away from grace. It is continuing and holding on, joined to a good beginning.

SECONDLY, I am to shew how this perseverance is to be understood.

1. It is not to be understood of all who profess Christ. Hypocrites may be seeming saints, and may have seeming grace, which may blaze for a while, and afterwards be quite extinguished, totally and finally lost, John 6:66. There are temporary believers, who continue for a while, but having no root, do wither quite away, Matth. 13:21. Mere out side Christians, and Christians in the letter, may so apostatise, as to lose all, and never recover.

2. It is to be understood of all real saints, those who are endowed with saving grace. Those who, by virtue of regeneration, may call God their Father, as well as the church their mother, shall abide in his family, and never fall out of it, John 8:35. Though the counterfeit of grace may be utterly lost, yet real grace cannot. We own,

(1.) Saints may lose the evidence of grace, so that they cannot discern it in themselves. Thus it may suffer an eclipse, Isa. 50:10. Sometimes a child of God not only believes, loves, &c. but knows he does so: but at other times it may be out of his sight, so as he may apprehend he has none. The jewel may fall by, though it cannot fall away; and the spiritual husband may lock up himself in his chamber from his spouse, though he never quite leaves the house.

(2.) Saints may lose the exercise of grace, Cant. 5:9. Though the holy fire be not quite put out, yet it may cease to flame for a while; though they have spiritual armour lying by them, they may be so benumbed with the prevailing of corruption, that they cannot wield it. Wise virgins may slumber and sleep as well as the foolish.

(3.) They may lose much of the measure of grace they have had. True grace, though it cannot die out, yet is subject to languishing and decays in the strength thereof, Rev. 3:2. They may lose much of their love to God and one another, Rev. 2:4 much of their former tenderness, as David's heart smote him when he cut off the lap of Saul's garment, but afterwards was guilty of murder and adultery; much of their liveliness in duties, Rev. 3:2 and so of other graces. But,

(2.) Saints can never lose grace finally, so as never to recover it, 1 Pet. 1:5. John 6:39. No doubt a child of God may stray away from the Lord as well as another? but though a servant may go, and never return to the house, yet a son will be sought out and brought back again, Psal. 119 ult. John 13:35. 'And the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the son abideth ever.' So however far the saints may go wrong, the Lord will recover them.

(2.) Saints never lose grace totally neither; they never lose it altogether, though for ever so short a while, 1 John 3:9. Their lamp may burn dim, but it is never quite put out; they may fall back, fall very low, so as themselves and others may have little hope of their recovery, but they never fall off, never fall away, Psal. 37:24. 'Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.'

Both these hold true of relative grace; that is, there is no falling out of the state of justification, adoption, union with Christ, peace with God, the love of God, &c. and of inherent grace, faith, love, the fear of God, &c.

THIRDLY, I proceed to shew that the saints shall persevere to the end. This is evident from,

1. The Lord's own promises. He has said it, and will he not do it? John 10:28, 29. Psalm 125:1. 'They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.' It is

true they have many enemies that watch to do them mischief, but the Lord has promised to guard them, Isa. 27:3. 'I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.' They may fall into sin, and provoke the Lord to anger against them; but he has promised, that though he lay his hand on them, he will not lift his love off them, Psal. 89:31–34. Though they may be forsaken, yet it shall neither be total nor final, Isa. 54:7–10.

2. From the saints' confidence of perseverance and eternal life. How confident was Asaph, Psal. 73:24. 'Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory?' If the saints could fall away from grace, how could they 'rejoice in hope of the glory of God?' Rom. 5:2. How could Paul triumph over 'death, life, angels, principalities, powers; things present and to come, height, depth,' &c? Rom. 8:38, 39. Confidence in their own management, is not the way of the godly. Prov. 28:26. 'He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.'

3. Lastly, According to the scripture, perseverance is a discriminating mark betwixt the elect and non-elected, Matt. 24:24 as also betwixt real saints and hypocrites, Luke 8:13, 14, 15. 1 John 2:19. From whence we may gather, that the utter apostasy of the elect saints is impossible in respect of the decree of God; that those who get true grace, keep it to the end, while others lose theirs; and that they who utterly apostatise, never were true saints.

FOURTHLY, I shall shew what are those things which make hypocrites fall away, but over the belly of which saints persevere. In the general, there are three things.

1. Satan's temptations, 1 Pet. 5:8. He is a subtle, powerful and malicious enemy, a liar and murderer from the beginning. Whatever hopeful signs are found about any, he sets himself to rob them of them, for their ruin. He seeks to set the hypocrite and the sincere through the wind, and prevails to blow away the one, but not the

other. By a miracle of grace, the saints are preserved amidst his fiery darts, Luke 22:32.

2. The world's snares. While professors are in the world, there are snares to catch them, and carry them off the way. (1.) The world's prosperity is a great snare, and makes many apostates, Prov. 1:32 and 30:9. But true grace will hold out against it, Cant. 8:7. (2.) Its adversity. Tribulation and persecution offends the temporary believer, and makes a scattering among Christ's summer-friends, Matth. 13:20, 21. But the true Christian will weather out the storm, Job 17:9. 'The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.' Poverty strips many of their religion, but not a true saint, Rev. 14:4. (3.) The example of the world; the torrent of an ungodly generation strips many of their form of godliness, Matth. 24:12. 'Because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold.' But the saints shall not be carried away with the stream, Psal. 12:7. 'Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

3. Lastly, The corruptions and lusts of the heart. These betray the hypocrite into apostasy, Jer. 4:3. Compare Luke 8:14. Lusts lulled asleep for a while, but not mortified, rise up and make shipwreck of many souls. But true grace is never quite expelled by the flesh's lustings against it; but by the power of God is preserved, like a spark of fire in the midst of an ocean.

FIFTHLY, I proceed to shew the grounds of the perseverance of the saints.

1. The unchangeable decree of God's election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of the Father to them. Electing love is free love, and also unchangeable, Jer. 31:3. 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' And God's purpose of grace and salvation cannot be disappointed, 2 Tim. 2:19. 'The purpose of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.'

2. The merit and intercession of Christ the Son. He redeemed them by paying a full price, which must be lost, if they be lost, 1 Pet. 1:18, 19. And 'he ever liveth to make intercession for them,' Heb. 7:25.

3. The perpetual abiding of the Spirit in and with them, John 14:16 which secures their union with Christ, and the preservation of the seed of grace, 1 John 3:9.

4. Lastly, The nature of the covenant of grace, which is furnished with such pillars as the first covenant had not, namely, the promises of perpetual conservation in the state of grace, Jer. 32:40. 'I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good: but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.'

SIXTHLY, I shall shew the means of pre-severance. Let none think that they may live carelessly, having once got grace, because it cannot be lost: for besides, that one's giving himself quite up to such an opinion and course is inconsistent with saving grace, God has joined together the ends and means, and none shall separate them, Acts 27:22. 'And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.'—Compare ver. 31. 'Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.' Now, in the general, these are,

1. God's ordinances and providences. He makes use of both to keep the feet of his saints, John 15:2.

2. The duties of religion, and exercise of the graces, faith, fear, watchfulness, &c. 1 Cor. 10:12. 'Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.'

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

Inf. 1. Would ye have a treasure which ye cannot lose? then get grace. Ye may lose your worldly treasures, comforts, and enjoyments; the world's good things may go.—But grace is durable.

2. Take heed to yourselves and beware of apostasy; for it is not the beginning well, but holding on to the end, that will secure your salvation, Matth. 10:22. 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved.' Beware lest Satan, the world, and your lusts, beguile you, and ye lose all ye have wrought, 2 John 8.

3. As ever ye would persevere, look well to the foundation of your religion; for sincerity will last, but hypocrisy is a disease in the vitals that will end in death. The builders endeavour to lay the foundation fast and securely, and then they are sure the super-structure they raise upon it shall stand firm. Therefore lay the foundation well, and ye may be assured that the building shall weather all storms.

4. Lastly, Let those whose care it is to be found in Christ, and to live to him in all the duties of piety and righteousness, be comforted amidst all their temptations, snares, and corruptions, in that God who has begun the good work, and will perfect it, Phil. 1:6.

OF THE BENEFITS WHICH BELIEVERS RECEIVE AT DEATH

PHIL. 1:21.—To me—to die is gain.

ALL must die; but as men's lives are very different, so their account in death also. To an ungodly man death is a loss, the greatest loss: but to a believer it is gain, the greatest gain.

Paul was now a prisoner in Rome, and his case in itself was doubtful whether it would terminate in life or death, (though he was assured it would not be death at that time, ver. 25.) But having taken a view of both, he does in the text, in his own person, give us, (1.) The sum of a believers life, that is, Christ. As all the lines drawn from the circumference meet in the centre, so the whole of a believer's life in

Christ, his honour being the scope of all. (2.) His estimate of a believer's death; he will not be a loser, but a gainer by it: it brings him in many benefits, and so is a gainful exchange.

The doctrine of the text is,

DOCT. 'Death is gain to a believer.'

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. In what respect death is gain to believers.

II. How it comes to be gain to them.

III. Deduce an inference or two.

I. I am to shew in what respects death is gain to believers. It is so in respect of their souls and their bodies.

FIRST, In respect of their souls. It separates their souls from their bodies, but not to their loss, but to their gain.—It is with the souls of believers at death, as with Paul and his company in their voyage, Acts 27. The ship broke in many pieces, but the passengers came all safe to land. So when the eye-strings break, the speech is laid, the last pulse beats, the last breath is drawn, the soul escapes, and gets safe away out of the troublesome sea of this world, into Immanuel's land. Now, there is a twofold gain or benefit which the souls of believers receive at death, namely perfection in holiness, and immediate entering into glory.

First, Perfection in holiness, Heb. 12:23.—'The spirits of just men made perfect.' In regeneration the elect get a new nature, which is a holy nature, 2 Pet. 1:4; but much of the old nature still remains. Then grace is planted in them by the Spirit. It grows up in the gradual advances of sanctification; but at death it is perfected, they are made perfectly holy. This perfection consists in two things.

1. A perfect freedom from sin, Eph. 5:27. The spiritual enemies they see to-day, they shall never see more, when once death has closed their eyes. Many a groan and struggle there is now to be free of sin, but still it hangs about the believer. Sometimes he gets his feet on the neck of his lusts, but they rise up again upon him: therefore he is never in safety to let down his watch, or to lay by the sword of the Spirit. The spiritual bands are never quite off here; but then it will be said, 'Loose him and let him go.' At death the saints shall be free,

(1.) From all commission of sin, Rev. 21:27. In the earthly paradise, sin was found, there Adam broke the whole law; but into the heavenly paradise no sin can enter. Not a vain thought shall ever go through a believer's heart more; there shall be no more temptation to sin, nor the least inclination to it.

(2.) From the very inbeing of sin. The body of death shall go out with the death of the body, and, then shall the desire be answered, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Sin's reigning power is broken in sanctification: yet it still abides as a troublesome guest; but at death it is plucked up by the roots. It is like the house under the law infected with the leprosy, for the removal of which the stones were carried to an unclean place.

(3.) From a possibility of sinning, Rev. 3:12. 'Him that over-cometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.' The first man in paradise, yea the angels in heaven till they were confirmed, were but as reeds liable to be shaken with the wind of temptations as the doleful event made appear. But by death putting an end to the believer's probationary life, he becomes a pillar in the temple of God, which can never more be moved.

2. In the arrival of their holiness at the highest pitch they are capable of, Eph. 4:13. Now every sincere soul has a perfection of holiness in respect of the parts thereof; they are like little children who have all the parts of a man, but none of them grown to their utmost pitch; but then they will have a perfection of degrees, answering to the holy law

in all points, like men who are come to their full growth. Sincerity shall then be turned to legal perfection.

(1.) Their understandings shall be perfectly illuminated, 1 Cor. 13:12. 'For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.' There shall then be no more complaints of weakness of knowledge in them who in their life were the weakest of all saints. There shall not be the least remains of darkness there, but a full sunshine shall be in them.

(2.) Their wills shall be perfectly upright, so that they shall will nothing but what is good, and that without the least bias to the other side, Rev. 21:27. A perfect conformity shall then be betwixt God's will and theirs, without the least possible jarring, 1 John 3:2.

(3.) The executive faculty shall then perfectly answer their will, readily and with all imaginable ease and delight, Matth. 6:10. Now the believer is often in the dark, he knows not what to do. Sometimes when he knows his duty, he has no will to it; there is a great aversion and backwardness that he has to strive with. Oft-times, when he would fain do it, he cannot, Matth. 26:41. 'The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' But then there shall be no more such impotency; he will be able to do whatever he will, and will nothing but what is good.

Secondly, Immediate entering into glory. As Pharaoh's jailor opening the prison-door to the butler, let him out into the court; so death letting the soul out of the body it goes to glory. Christ said to the thief on the cross, 'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise,' Luke 23:43. So death is to them the beginning of an immortal life; a strait entry by which they go out into the heavenly paradise; the ship by which they are transported into Immanuel's land. Here consider,

1. The glory they enter into. They pass after death into,

1st, A glorious place, namely, heaven, the seat of the blessed, 2 Cor. 5:1. It is Christ's Father's house, where their room is ready for them,

when they have no more place on earth, John 14:2. 'In my Father's house,' says Christ, 'are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you.' The place which has no need of the sun and moon, but the glory of God lightens it, Rev. 21:23. Behold the outside bespangled with sun, moon, and stars; how glorious must it be within!

2dly, A glorious society, namely, the society of other saints gone before them, 'The general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven,' Heb. 12:23 the society of the holy angels, ib. the society of the glorious Mediator, his Father, and Holy Spirit, even the blessed Trinity, John 17:24. Heb. 12:23, 24. It is a glorious society they are admitted into.

3dly, A glorious state. This is 'the house in the heavens, eternal, not made with hands,' 2 Cor. 5:1. It is a glorious state the soul enters into, a glory God puts on the souls of believers when out of the body. It is what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive; it is what we cannot make language of. —It is a state of rest and perfect blessedness.

2. That they immediately after death pass into it, and do not abide any where else, and sleep until the day of judgment, as some profane men would have it, is clear. For,

(1.) Scripture instances plead this. So to the thief upon the cross it was said, 'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise,' Luke 23:43. So of Lazarus it is said, that 'he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom,' Luke 16:22. And if it be a parable, as most likely it is, it is the more full to the purpose. And there is the same reason for all the saints as for one, they being all as ready at death as ever they will be, working-time for preparation being then over, John 9:4.

(2.) There is no middle state; but when the saints put off the body, they put on glory, 2 Cor. 5:1, 2. When they are 'absent from the body,' they are 'present with the Lord,' ver. 8. When they 'depart,' they are

'with Christ,' Phil. 1:23. When they die, they 'enter into peace' and rest, Isa. 57:1 the 'rest remaining for the people of God,' Heb. 4:9.

(3.) Lastly, The contrary doctrine is utterly inconsistent with the blessed state the scriptures ascribe to believers after death, Rev. 14:13. 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours.' And it is inconsistent with believers their desire of death, that they may be with Christ in glory, 2 Cor. 5:1, 2. Phil. 1:23. What was to make Paul in that strait? if he could not be with Christ before the general judgment, he would have chose rather to have lived till then, that he might have been with him in some sort, than to have died.

SECONDLY, In respect of their bodies, death is gain.—They must lie down in a grave; but death,

1. Cannot harm them, nor bring them to any real loss to be lamented. For,

(1.) Their dead bodies are still united to Christ. Though death separate their souls from their bodies, it cannot separate them from Christ, even every part of their body from another, 1 Thess. 4:14. They are members of Christ still, though in a grave, Rom. 8:11. 'Our friend Lazarus is dead,' said Christ.

(2.) They cannot be held there for ever. It is but till the resurrection, Job 19:26. The saints' dust is precious, locked up in the grave as a cabinet, till the Lord have further use for it. They are his precious fruit, that lie mellowing in the grave, and ripening for a glorious resurrection.

2. It is a real gain to them, in respect their graves are the places of their rest; not their prison, but their beds of rest, wherein they are to rest till the morning of the resurrection. The soul is the man, and it enjoys the glory of heaven; mean while the body rests in the grave, where it will enjoy a profound and tranquil repose, till it be united to

the soul at the time when the dead in Christ shall rise from their long sleep.

II. I come to shew how death comes to be gain to them. It is a rest.

1. From all the ordinary troubles and afflictions of this life, Rev. 14:13 forecited.

2. From all persecutions and hardships from men for the cause of Christ, Job 8:17. 'There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest.'

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

Inf. 1. That the saints may be encouraged and stirred up to press after perfection in holiness, since they shall certainly obtain it at length, Phil. 3:13, 14.

2. The wicked shall come to a perfection, so to speak in their wickedness, and immediately pass into hell, Luke 16:22, 23.

3. There is no purgatory nor middle state betwixt heaven and hell.

4. The toils and troubles of the world, that find men in the way of the Lord, should not discourage them, or carry them off their way, since they will all soon have an end.

5. There is no reason to mourn for the death of godly relations, as those who have no hope, 1 Thess. 4:13.

6. Lastly, A dying day is the best day for a believer that is in all his life, Eccl. 7:1. It is their marriage, home-coming, and redemption day.

OF BENEFITS AT THE RESURRECTION

HEB. 11:35.—That they might obtain a better resurrection.

IN this chapter the apostle brings in a cloud of witnesses to the truth and excellency of religion, and the power of faith, shewing the great things faith can do, and also can suffer. In this verse we have an instance of each kind. (1.) Faith got back the dead, in the case of Elijah and the widow of Serapta's dead son, 1 Kings 17:22, 23 and of Elisha and the Shunamite's son, 2 Kings 4:35, 36. Herein the faith of the prophets, and the faith of the women too, was active, though the former was more strong than the latter. (2.) Faith made constant martyrs, helped them to bear most cruel tortures even to death, refusing deliverance on sinful terms; which seems to respect the martyrs of the Jewish church under Antiochus Epiphanes. What carried them up was the faith of a better resurrection. Hence two things they had the faith of.

1. Of a resurrection, that there would be a resurrection of the body; that they and their enemies, and all mankind, after death, would rise again.

2. Of a resurrection for themselves, better than that deliverance from death which their enemies offered them.—They saw by an eye of faith a glorious resurrection abiding them and all the people of God, attended with so many glorious benefits as might counterbalance their heaviest sufferings.

The text affords this doctrine, viz.

DOCT. 'Believers shall obtain a resurrection from the dead, attended with such glorious benefits, as the faith of the same may animate them to endure the most cruel sufferings for Christ.'

Here I shall,

I. Touch a little on the doctrine of the resurrection in general.

II. Consider the resurrection of believers, that better and glorious resurrection.

III. Apply.

I. I shall touch a little on the doctrine of the resurrection in general. And I shall shew,

1. That there shall be a resurrection of the dead.
2. Who shall be raised.
3. What shall be raised.
4. The Author of the resurrection.

First, I am to shew, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead. This is a fundamental article of the Christian faith, the denying of which is subversive of the foundation of Christianity, 1 Cor. 15:13, 14. 'But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.' It is a point of faith which we owe to revelation, that reason must assent to as highly reasonable when proposed, Acts 26:3. Two things are the causes of men's disbelieving it, ignorance of the scriptures, and the power of God, Matt. 22:29. Accordingly there are two things that will clear it.

1. God is able to raise the dead; the resurrection is within the compass of the almighty arm. Man dying, his soul does not die; and though his body be dissolved, it is not reduced to nothing; if it were, God could make it over again. But the particles which make up the body do remain. And,

(1.) Omniscience knows what they are, and where they are. If the dust of a thousand generations were jumbled together, Omniscience can separate them. An expert gardener having a hundred different

seeds in his hand, can distinguish betwixt seed and seed; and why not an omniscient God betwixt dust and dust?

(2.) Infinite power can join them altogether which belong to one man's body, and so make it up what it was, and join the soul again to the body raised up, Luke 1:37. He made the world of nothing, and he can reform man's body of pre-existent matter. As the watchmaker takes down the watch, and sets every piece in its proper place, so can God man's body.

2. God has positively told us, that he will do it, John 5:28, 29. 7:39.

Secondly, I proceed to shew, who shall be raised. Here two things are to be observed.

1. Those who shall be alive at the coming of Christ, as they shall not die, so they cannot rise from the dead. They shall undergo a sudden change, whereby the qualities of their bodies shall be altered, so as it shall be to them instead of death and resurrection, 1 Cor. 15:51, 52.

2. All that ever had life and died, men and women, old and young, godly and ungodly, shall rise again, Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:12. If they once had a soul united to their body, though the belly was their grave, they shall partake of this resurrection. The sea and the earth are God's stewards, which shall then be called to give back what they got a-keeping.

Thirdly, I shall shew, what shall be raised. The self-same bodies for substance that died, shall be raised again, though with very different qualities; yet it shall be the very same body that was laid in the grave, and not another. For,

1. The scripture is very plain for this. It is 'this corruptible that puts on incorruption, and this mortal that puts on immortality,' Cor. 15:53. 'Though after my skin (says Job), worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God,' Job 19:26.

2. The equity of the Judge requires it. An equitable judge does not suffer one to fight and another to get the reward; and therefore he will make those bodies which are the temples of grace, the temples of glory. Nay, they are Christ's members, and so cannot perish. Neither can it be that one body sin, and another suffer in hell.

3. The nature of resurrection requires it; for that would not be a rising again, but a new creation. Death is sleep to the godly, the resurrection an awaking, a change of the vile body, Phil. 3:21.

Fourthly, I come now to shew, who is the author of the resurrection. It is the work of God alone, and above the power of any creature whatsoever. It is one of those works that are common to the Trinity. To the Father, 1 Cor. 6:14. 'God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power;' The Son, John 5:28. 'The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his [Christ's] voice.' The Holy Spirit, Rom. 8:11. 'If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.'

II. The second general head is, to consider the resurrection of believers, that better and glorious resurrection. And this I shall do, 1. In itself. 2. In its consequents.

FIRST, I shall consider the resurrection of believers in itself, and here I shall shew,

1. Some things that ensure the blessed resurrection of believers.
2. How they shall be raised.
3. In what case they shall rise.
4. The particular qualities of their bodies at the resurrection.

First, I shall take notice of some things that ensure the blessed resurrection of believers.

1. God's covenant with believers, which is with their whole man, comprehending their bodies as well as their souls, which by virtue thereof are temples of the Holy Ghost, Matth. 22:32. 'God is not the God of the dead but of the living.'

2. The end of Christ's death, which was to destroy death, Hos. 13:14. 'O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.' How else would be accomplished his swallowing up death in victory, if death kept those that are his for ever? No; this is the last enemy, 1 Cor. 15:25, 26. And when the resurrection comes, and not till then, will that victory be complete, ver. 54.

3. The resurrection of Christ. He was the first-fruits from death. his people the harvest that must follow, 1 Cor. 15:22, 23. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.' He rose as a public person, and so has got up above death in their name, Eph. 2:6. 'Hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.'

4. Their union with Christ, Rom. 8:11 forecited. He has redeemed their bodies as well as their souls, and therefore they expect the redemption of their bodies, Rom. 8:23; and has united them to himself, Eph. 5:30. Now, since the head liveth, the members shall live too; as when the head gets above the waters, the members follow.

Secondly, I am to shew, how believers shall be raised. The wicked shall be raised by the power of Christ as a just Judge. The divine power that shut them up in the grave as in a prison, will bring them out, in order to their receiving the last sentence, to enter into the prison of hell.

But the godly shall be raised by virtue of the Spirit of Christ, that bond of union betwixt Christ and those blessed bodies; so that it shall be to them as a pleasant awakening out of sleep. As an awakening man draws his limbs to him, so will their raised head draw them to him out of their graves, Rom. 8:11.

Thirdly, I shall shew, in what case they shall rise.

2. Happily, as rising to life, eternal life, when others rise to their eternal ruin, Dan. 12:2. That will be the happiest day that ever their eyes saw. The day of their death was better than that of their birth; but they of their resurrection will be the best of all.

2. Joyfully, Isa. 26:19. 'Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust.' That is the way wherein Christ's bride rises out of her bed for the marriage. Jonah had a joyful outgoing from the whale's belly, Daniel out of the den, and Pharaoh's butler out of the prison: but what are all these to the joys at the resurrection of believers? Their doubts and fears died, and lay down with them, but they shall not rise with them. When the soul comes out of heaven, and the body out of the grave, what a joyful meeting will there be of the blessed couple!

3. Gloriously, being made like unto Christ's glorious body, Phil. 3:21. However mean they were while in the world, or ignominiously treated in life or in death, they shall have a glorious resurrection.

Fourthly, I shall shew, what shall be the particular qualities of the bodies of believers at the resurrection. The bodies of the saints shall be raised.

1. Incorruptible, 1 Cor. 15:42. Now the members of their living bodies, are liable to corruption, when they die all putrefying together; but then they will never more be liable to putrefaction; never more liable to sickness, death, nor the least pain, to wearing or wearying. There will then be no outward violence, no inward cause of uneasiness.

2. Glorious, ver. 43. The most hard favoured saint will outstrip the now greatest beauty. The seat of that beauty will not be the face but the whole body, Matt. 13:43. There shall be no defects nor deformities in those bodies; Isaac shall no more be blind, nor Jacob halt; Leah shall not be tender eyed, nor Mephibosheth lame of his legs.

As the artificer melts down the misshapen vessel, and casts it over again in a new mould; so doth the Lord with the bodies of the saints.

3. Powerful and strong, ib. There will be no more feebleness and weakness. The weak shall be as David, and the house of David, shall be as God. They shall be able to bear out in continual exercise without wearying, and to bear the weight of glory, for which the flesh and blood of a giant would now be too weak.

4. Lastly, Spiritual, ver. 44. That is, like spirits. (1.) In that they shall need none of the now necessary supplies of nature, meat, drink, &c, Matt. 22:30 full without meat, warm without cloaths, healthful without physic. (2.) Active and nimble like spirits. So they shall meet the Lord in the air, and like so many eagles gather together, where the carcase is.

Inf. 1. Fearful will the doom of persecutors be. (2.) The saints may be encouraged to suffer for Christ. (3.) Faith and holiness is the best way to beauty. (4.) Let this allay the believer's fear of death, Gen. 46:3, 4. (5.) Let this comfort him against sickliness of body; (6.) and under the death of godly relations. (7.) Rise from sin, and glorify God with your bodies and souls.

SECONDLY, We are now to consider that better resurrection in the consequents thereof, or what shall follow thereupon, the which the martyrs in this case had in their view.

Here I shall shew,

1. The consequents thereof before the judgment.

2. At the judgment.

3. After the judgment.

First, I shall shew the consequents of this better resurrection before the judgment. There are two benefits which believers have from Christ betwixt the resurrection and the judgment. We left them raised up out of their graves in glory. Now,

1. They shall be gathered together from all corners of the earth by the ministry of angels, Mat. 24:31. By the glorious gospel having its efficacy on them, they were separated from the world in respect of their state and manner of life, but still abode among them as to their bodily presence, and some of them at a great distance from the rest: but then they shall not only be visibly distinguished from the reprobate by the shining glory upon them, while the faces of the rest are covered with blackness; but these fair ones shall all be gathered into one glorious company, out from among the wicked, by the ministry of the holy angels, Matth. 13:48, 49.

2. While the wicked are left on the earth, they shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, 1 Thess. 4:17. Those who are found alive, and those who are raised out of their graves, shall ascend in one glorious body; by what means, the Lord himself knows; but he who made Peter walk on the water, can cause them make their way like eagles through the air. And they shall meet the Lord there to welcome him at his second coming, while others shall be filled with dread of the Judge and also to attend him for his honour, as the angels also do.

Who can sufficiently conceive the glory of these benefits, by which their happiness is so far carried on?

Secondly. We shall view the consequents of this resurrection at the judgment.

The throne being erected, and the glorious man, Christ, the Judge of the world, being set down upon it, and the parties sisted before him to be judged, the wicked as well as the godly.

1. The glorious company of believers, being separated from the black howling company of the wicked in that day, shall be set on the right hand of the Judge, while the wicked shall be set on his left hand, Matt. 25:32, 33. They shall then have the most honourable place; and then will there be a mighty turn; many of the right hand-men of the world will get the left hand, and contrariwise.

2. They shall be openly acknowledged by Jesus Christ, their Lord and Judge, Mat. 10:39. Consider,

1st, What it is for Christ to acknowledge them. It is to own them for his own, to acknowledge the relations they stand in to him, Mal. 3:17. 'They shall be mine,' i. e. owned to be so. To the wicked he will say, he 'knows them not:' he will reject all their pretentions to him: but as for believers, he will own and acknowledge them in all the relations wherewith faith invested them; he will acknowledge the fair company for his contracted spouse, his children, his members, even them, and every one of them.

2dly, How he will acknowledge them then. He will do it openly, most publicly and openly. Consider here,

(1.) Our Lord Jesus acknowledges all that are his, even now in this life, not only in his own breast, by looking on them as his; but before his Father, in whose presence he appears making intercession for them as his own, John 17:9, 10. He does it also by the testimony of his Spirit to their sonship, Rom. 8:16; by the seal of his own image set upon them, and by many signal appearances of his providence for them.

(2.) He will then acknowledge them in a quite other and open manner, before many witnesses, so as men and devils shall be obliged to understand, that these are they whom the King on the

throne delights to honour. He will do it before his Father, and the angels of heaven, Rev. 3:5 in effect saying to his Father, 'Behold me, and the children thou hast given me.' He will acknowledge them in their own hearing, and the hearing of all the world, Matth 25:34.

(3.) They shall be openly acquitted by the Lord in that day, by the sentence solemnly passed in their favour, whereby also they are adjudged to life, Matth. 25:34. 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Consider here,

1st. What they shall be acquitted from. They shall be acquitted from all the guilt of all their sins, and for ever discharged from all punishment for them, Acts 3:19. The mouths of all accusers shall be finally stopt, and the white stone shall then be given in a way of eminency.

2dly, Are they not acquitted now? Yes, they are in the first moment of believing acquitted of the guilt of eternal wrath for ever, Rom. 8:1; and on their fresh application to the blood of Christ for their after sins, they likewise are blotted out, 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.' And at death they get their acquittance too, Heb. 9:27. Yet at the general judgment they are acquitted likewise.

3dly, Wherein doth their acquittance now and at that day agree and differ.

(1.) They agree, [1.] In the substance of the acquittance, which is the same now and hereafter, from the guilt of sin, and punishment thereof. [2.] In the ground of it: it proceeds in both upon the merits of Christ, Eph. 1:7 and not on works, which are brought in at the last day as evidences of their faith, not as causes of their justification.

(2.) They differ, [1.] In respect of openness. Now they are acquitted in the world, Rom. 8:1 where yet they have much ado to read it sometimes; in their own consciences, 1 John 3:21 which they themselves only can understand; but then from the throne, in the

presence of angels and men. [2.] In respect of assurance and comfort. Of the former a believer may doubt, but not of the latter. [3.] In respect of fulness. In the last day they are acquitted from all effects of sin whatsoever, their bodies being, never to die more: and joined to their souls, never to be separated more; but not so in the former.

4thly, Why shall they be openly acknowledged and acquitted at the last day? He will do it,

(1.) To wipe off, with his own fair hand, all the foul aspersions which the hypocrites and profane did cast upon them in this world, Isa. 66:5. Many a time the Lord's dearest children are made to lie among the pots, blackened with ill names, reproaches, &c. But then they shall be 'like doves whose wings are covered with silver, and their feathers with yellow gold.'

(2.) To give them a reward of grace, for their confessing him before the world, cleaving to his truths and ways, in the midst of an adulterous generation, and their not denying him on whatever temptations, Matth. 10:32. 'Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.' Compare 2 Tim. 2:12, 'If we deny him, he will also deny us.' The prospect of this made the martyrs cleave to him in the face of cruel deaths.

(3.) To seal the end of all their own doubts, jealousies, and fears, 1 Cor. 4:4. Many a time it is a question with the believer, whether he belongs to Christ or not: even when he has in all sincerity embraced the covenant, yet these like so many ghosts haunt him. No doubt by that time they will all be gone, but by this acknowledgement their departure will be sealed.

(4.) For the increase of their joy, and the shame of their enemies, Isa. 66:5.

4. They shall be adjudged to everlasting life, and solemnly invited to enter into possession of the kingdom, Matth. 25:34. 'Come ye,' &c. in which every word has a weight of glory.

5. Lastly, They being themselves absolved, shall be honoured to be Christ's assessors in judging the wicked, 1 Cor. 6:1. 'Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?' They shall judge them by way of communion with Christ their head, this work being a part of the Mediator's honour redounding to all his members: By way of approbation of the Judge's sentence against them, saying Amen to the doom of the wicked, even the godly parent to that of the wicked child, the holy husband to that of the unholy wife, &c. Rev. 19:1, 3. See Rev. 3:21.

Thirdly, We shall consider the consequents of the resurrection after the judgment. Believers shall be made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity. Here I shall shew,

1. Wherein perfect blessedness lies.

2. What shall make believers perfectly blessed.

1. I am to shew wherein perfect blessedness lies. It lies in two things.

1st, Perfect freedom from all evil whatsoever, whether of sin or misery. Thus blessed shall believers be then, perfectly free from sin, Eph. 5:27 and free from suffering any manner of way, Rev. 21:4.

2dly, Full satisfaction to all the desires of the soul, Phil. 4:11. Their desires shall be fully satisfied; they shall have that beyond which they can crave no more. For where there is any want, there can be no perfect blessedness.

2. I am to shew what shall make them thus perfectly blessed. It is the enjoyment of God. They shall have his glorious presence with them, Rev. 21:3. They shall see him as he is, 1 John 3:2 the man Christ with their bodily eyes, and the invisible God with the eyes of their minds,

called the beatific vision, the most perfect knowledge of God which the creature is capable of. They shall be knit to him gloriously, Rev. 21:3 just quoted. Love then will be at its height. And they shall enjoy him to their full happiness.

(1.) Immediately; not in the use of means and ordinances, but there they sit down at the fountain-head, Rev. 21:22.

(2.) Fully; God will with-hold nothing of himself from them: they shall be stinted to no measure but what their own capacity makes; and in him they shall have what will satisfy all their desires.

3. Lastly, Eternally, 1 Thess. 4:17. 'So shall we ever be with the Lord.'

I conclude this subject with a few inferences.

Inf. 1. Come out now from among the wicked world. A separation there will be betwixt the godly and the wicked. If it be in your favour, it will begin now. Leave them now, if ye would not be left with them after the resurrection.

2. Beware of rash judging those that have any lineaments of Christ's image upon them. Ye may judge and condemn the evil actions of the best of men, if ye be sure from the word that they are evil. But, O my soul! enter not into the secret of those who presumptuously take upon them to judge men's state, hearts, and consciences, upon slips of human infirmity and weakness.

3. Let none be ashamed to own Christ and his truths and ways before the world, remembering that the day cometh in which lie will confess those that confess him, and deny those that deny him.

4. Though the day of judgment be an awful thought, it will be a happy day to believers, as they will then be for ever delivered from all moral and penal evils, and admitted into the greatest felicity in the enjoyment of their God and Redeemer for ever.

5. That there is no true happiness till we come to the enjoyment of God, nor full happiness till we arrive at the full enjoyment of him.

6. Lastly, Miserable is now, and at the resurrection will be, the state of the wicked, where the reverse of all the happiness of the saints will be found, and that in the most dreadful manner. Let us then all seek to be found among those who shall be partakers of the better and glorious resurrection.

OF THE DUTY WHICH GOD REQUIRETH OF MAN

1 SAM. 15:22.—And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?

THIS text is a reproof given to one that wore a crown, teaching him, that though he was Israel's sovereign, he was God's subject. Saul had been sent, by God's express command, on an expedition against the Amalekites, with a solemn charge utterly to 'destroy all that they had, and spare them not; but to slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass,' ver. 3. The expedition was crowned with success. Saul having destroyed all the people, took Agag their king prisoner, and saved the best of the cattle; and when quarrelled by Samuel for this his partial obedience to the heavenly mandate, he pretended that the people had spared the sheep and oxen, which had been devoted to destruction as well as the people, to sacrifice unto the Lord in Gilgal. The words of the text contain Samuel's answer to this silly apology: Hath the Lord (says he) as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? importing, that obedience to the voice and will of God is more acceptable to him than all the sacrifices in the world.

In the words we may notice,

1. The duty which God requires of men, which is obedience. This is required of man, of all men, rulers and ruled: those whom others must obey, must obey God.

2. What they are to obey the voice of the Lord, whereby he manifests his will: it is his revealed will, whatever way he is pleased to notify it to them. Hence the obedience in the text is called hearkening; the soul first receiving the knowledge of God's mind, and then complying with it.

3. The excellency and eminency of this duty.

(1.) God delights in it.

(2.) All other things must yield to it, but it to none. Burnt-offerings and sacrifices, even the fat of them, are nothing in comparison of this.

The text affords the following doctrine, viz.

DOCT. 'The duty which God requireth of man, is obedience to his revealed will.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Explain it; and,

II. Deduce a few inferences for application.

I. For explanation, let us consider the duty which man owes to God, of whom he requires it, the rule of it, the properties of it, and on what accounts we owe it.

First, Let us consider the duty which man owes unto God. That is obedience. We are in a state of subjection to God. He is our superior, and his will we are to obey in all things. He is our King, and we must

obey him as his subjects, by complying with all his statutes and ordinances. He is our Father, and we must shew him all respect, reverence, and affection, as his dutiful children. He is our Lord and Master, and we must yield him the most cheerful and unlimited service, as is our reasonable duty. He is our supreme Lawgiver, and we must receive the law at his mouth, every law and precept, every ordinance that is stamped with his authority, whatever is subscribed with a 'Thus saith the Lord,' readily obeying it.

Secondly, Let us consider of whom the Lord requires this duty. Of every man without exception, capable of knowing his will. The greatest are fast bound to his obedience as the meanest, the poor as well as the rich, Pagans as well as Christians, kings as well as subjects. No man can be free from this duty more than he can be a God to himself. Not a son or daughter sprung from Adam can plead an exemption from this duty of obeying the will of the Lord. It is an easy yoke wreathed upon the necks of all, and is imposed on them by an indispensable law.

Thirdly, Let us consider the rule of that obedience. It is the will of God. His will is our supreme law. Not the secret will of God; for that which God never revealed to man, cannot be his rule; but the revealed will of God, Deut. 29:29. 'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children.' Men may fulfil the secret will of God, and determination of his providence, and be deeply guilty, as we see the Jews did in crucifying the Lord of glory, Acts 2:23 under the guilt of which heinous sin that people groan to this day. But conformity to God's revealed will is our duty. Whatever is revealed in the sacred scriptures as the will of God, whether relating to what man is to believe, or what he is to practise, is to be performed and done, and that at our peril.

Fourthly, Let us consider the properties of this obedience which God requires of man.

1. It is sincere obedience to his will. Hence David says, 'I was upright before him,' Psal. 18:23. Hypocritical obedience may please men, but not God, the searcher of hearts. It was the commendation of the obedience of the Romans, that they 'obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered them,' Rom. 6:17. That sacrifice that wants the heart, will never be accepted on God's altar. God weighs not the affections of his people to him by their actions, so much as their actions by their affections, as in the case of Abraham's offering up Isaac, Heb. 11:17.; in that of the Israelites offering to go into the promised land, Num. 14:40 compared with ver. 42, 44 which was an act of downright disobedience to the commandment of the Lord, notified to them by Moses. All obedience without uprightness or sincerity, is a mere counterfeit, an empty pretence, which will be rejected with abhorrence.

2. It must be constant obedience. We must 'keep God's law continually, for ever and ever,' as the Psalmist resolved to do, Psal. 119:44. Man is ever doing something, yet he must always abide within the hedge of the law. Our obedience to God is all wrong when it comes only by fits, as heat in an ague, or is broke off like those that go to sea for pleasure, who come ashore when the storm rises. God is unchangeable, and we must be constant and steady in obeying his will; at no time daring to act contrary to it.

3. It must be tender obedience. We must 'abstain from all appearance of evil,' 1 Thess. 5:22. We must 'hate even the garment spotted with the flesh,' Jude 23. We must not rub on this hedge, nor come too near the borders of wickedness. We have to do with a jealous God, whom whorish looks will offend, Ezek. 6:9. We cannot be too nice in obedience. We must not, in order to practice, examine whether it be a great or a little sin. All such distinctions are highly criminal, and inconsistent with the disposition of the person of a tender heart, who hates every sin of every kind, whether great or small, the wicked act as well as the wicked thought. A tender, a relenting heart, a heart afraid of sin, and cautions of the least wrong

thought or act, is that which God requires, and the obedience resulting from it is the tender obedience here required.

4. It must be ready obedience, like that of those of whom the Psalmist speaks, 'As Boon as they hear of me, they shall obey me,' Psal. 18:24. We must do, and not delay; but be like the good David, who said, 'I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments,' Psal. 119:60. We are not to dispute, but obey; 'not to confer with flesh and blood,' Gal. 1:16. It was Jonah's sin that he did not readily comply; and it was Abraham's commendation, that he did not dispute God's orders, but 'went not knowing whither he went,' Heb. 11:8. The least intimation of God's will, either as to doing or suffering, must be immediately and readily complied with, notwithstanding all discouragements and carnal reasonings. God's call and command must drown the voice of carnal ease, and all arguments arising from Spare thyself. Does God say? we must immediately go whither he directs us: does he say, dome? we must instantly obey the summons, saying, Lord, we are here, ready to do what thou pleasest to order or enjoin us. Without this readiness and alacrity, all our obedience is stark naught, a matter of mere force and compulsion; and therefore unacceptable to the great God. whom we are bound to serve with a perfect heart and a willing mind.

5. It must be universal obedience, Psal. 119:6 in 'having a respect unto all God's commandments.' The whole of the commands of God have the same divine stamp upon them. They are one golden chain: whoso takes away one link, breaks the chain; if the connection be destroyed, the whole machine falls asunder. Hear what the apostle James says on this head, chap. 2:10, 11. 'Whosoever shall keep the law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.' Obedience to one command will never sanctify disobedience to another. The contempt shewn to one is a contempt of the one Lawgiver who appointed the whole. Hear what Christ, the glorious Legislator of the church, hath said on this article, 'Whosoever shall

break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.' Thus the transgressing of one of the least of God's commandments, if any of them can justly be called such, is a breach of the others, however great and important, and that because the authority of God, that gives sanction to the whole, is slighted and contemned. Whoso makes no conscience of any one known duty, discovers hypocrisy in the rest.

6. It must be absolute obedience, like that of Abraham, who, when called to go out into a place which he was not acquainted with, went accordingly, 'not knowing whether he went,' Heb. 11:8. Subjects are obedient to magistrates, people to pastors, wives to husbands, children to parents; but absolute obedience is due to none but God: for we are to call no man father upon earth, Matt. 23:9. If their commands be contradicted by God's, they are not to be obeyed; but though God's commands be contradicted by all the world, we must obey them, as the disciples refused to obey the commands of the Jewish council, in not preaching in the name of Jesus, because they clashed with the orders of their exalted Master, Acts 4:19. The most unreserved and unlimited obedience is due to the will and command of the great Lord of heaven and earth, and that without exception or reserve, say to the contrary who will.

7. Lastly, It must be perfect; though now in our fallen state we cannot give any obedience that deserves that epithet. God may and does require of all men in whatsoever state, Matt. 5 ult. 'Be perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' Though he accepts sincere obedience from those that are in Christ, yet he requires of them perfect obedience, and every imperfection is their sin. Though he has not suspended their justification on their perfection, yet it is what they naturally owe to God, whose law is perfect, and must have a perfect obedience performed to it, either by man himself or his surety. The believer, sensible of his utter incapacity to perform such an obedience to the holy law of God, renounces all his own sinful and imperfect, though sincere obedience, and betakes himself to the

complete obedience of his Surety, and presents it as his own to God, which he accepts.

In short, all true and acceptable obedience to the will of God flows from a right principle, that of faith and love in the heart. Faith is the hand that unites the soul to Christ, and obedience to God is the fruit of that union. Love is the spring and source of it; for he that loveth Christ, keepeth his commandments. And it must be directed to a right end, namely, the glory of God. We are not to obey God, in order to stop the mouth of a natural conscience, or gain applause among men, but to grow more like God, and bring more honour and glory to him.

Fifthly, Let us consider on what accounts do we owe this obedience to God. On these principally, viz.

1. Because he is our great and glorious Creator, to whom we owe our life and being. He is our Lord, and we are his subjects; he is our Master, and we are his servants. And therefore it is just and right that we should obey him, and conform to his will. He is every thing that speaks an authority to command us, and that can challenge an humility in us to obey. Man holds all of God, and therefore owes all the operations capable to be produced by those faculties, to the sovereign power that endued him with them. Man had no being but from him, and he hath no motion without him; he should therefore have no being but for him, and no motion but according to his will. To call him Lord, and not to act in subjection to him, is to mock and put an affront upon him. Hence it is said, 'Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?' Luke 6:46.

2. Because he is our chief end, the chief and last end of all being. The Lord hath made all things for himself; and of him, and through him, and to him, are all things. His glory should be the ultimate end of all our actions, and the mark to which they should all be directed. He gave being to all things, that they might shew forth his praise. All the brute creatures, things animate and inanimate, do this in a passive

manner; but men and angels, who are rational agents, are bound to do this actively; and they are designed by God for this very end and purpose.

3. Because he is the conserving cause of all. As he gave man a being, so he upholds and preserves him therein, by his mighty power. The preservation of the creatures is as it were a continued creation; and in order to it there is necessary a continual exertion of divine power, and a constant efflux of providential influence, without which they could not move and act at all. As therefore the life and motions of men depend entirely upon God as their upholder, so that life and those motions should be employed for promoting his glory, and promoting his will.

4. Because of the eminency of his nature, which founds his supreme dominion over us. God is the most glorious and excellent of all beings, and the source and spring of all other beings whatsoever. He is possessed of all perfections in an infinite and transcendent manner. Whatever perfections, excellencies, and amiable qualities, are scattered among the creatures, they all unite in him in the utmost perfection, and in him they shine with the most resplendent glory.—And therefore he has a just title to the homage and obedience of all his creatures.

5. Because he is our good and gracious Benefactor, from whose bountiful hand all our mercies do flow. It is in him that we live, move, and have our being. Our health, strength, time, and all blessings, spiritual or temporal, that we enjoy, are the fruits of his goodness and providential care. Now, this lays strong obligations upon us to serve and obey him. We find the Lord aggravating the rebellion of the Jews from the care he had taken in bringing them up, and their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, Isa. 1:2. 'I have nourished and brought up children, but they have rebelled against me,' which clearly implies, that the benefits he had bestowed upon them were strong obligations to an ingenuous observance of him; and we find him threatening to deprive them of the blessings he had

bestowed upon them, and to bring great distress upon them for the neglect of this duty, Deut. 28:47, &c.

6. Lastly, Because he is our Governor and supreme Lawgiver. He is a Lawgiver to all, to irrational as well as rational creatures. The heavens have their ordinances, Job 38:33. All the creatures have a law imprinted on their beings, but rational creatures have divine statutes inscribed on their hearts, as Rom. 2:14, 15. 'When the Gentiles, which have not the [written] law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts.' And they have laws more clearly and fully set before them in the word. The sole power of making laws does originally reside in God, Jam. 4:12. 'There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.' He only hath power to bind the conscience. And therefore to him obedience is due from all to whom he has prescribed laws.

I come now to deduce some inferences.

Inf. 1. Does God require from men obedience to his revealed will? Then, in whatsoever state a man is, he owes obedience to the will of God; and therefore, in the saddest of sufferings, even in hell, men properly sin against God,—For this obedience is founded on the natural dependence of the creature on its Creator, and the creature can no more be free of it than it can be a god to itself. Much more God's exalting men in the world gives them no allowance to be vile. Whatever men's state be, God requires of them obedience to his will therein; and they are rebels if they withhold it, and shall be dealt with as such accordingly.

2. The doing of what God does not command can be no acceptable service or obedience to God. Our duty to God is not to be measured by our imaginations, but by the revealed will of God. Therefore, when men make those things to be duties which no revelation from the Lord makes to be so, the Lord may well say, 'who hath required these

things at your hand?' Nothing but what is commanded of God can lawfully be the object of our duty.

3. Those who never heard the gospel will not be condemned for their not believing it; for the revelation of God's will must go before our actual obligation to do it, Rom. 2:12. 'As many as have sinned without law, [that is, the written or revealed law of God] shall also perish without law.' This ought to stir up all who bear the Christian name, to be vigorous and lively in obeying God, particularly the great command of believing in the name of his Son; as considering, that whosoever doth not so obey and believe the gospel, shall be damned, Mark 16:16.

4. All men are allowed for themselves to examine the will of their superiors, whether in church or state, to see whether it be not against the will of God; and if it be so, not to obey it, 1 Cor. 10:15. The Bereans were commended for so doing, Acts 17:11. There is a difference betwixt subjection and obedience. These two may be separated in our dealings with men that are our superiors; we may and must refuse obedience to them in evil actions, while subjection to them remains in other things. Thus the apostles shewed subjection to the Jewish rulers, while they refused to obey their unlawful commands, Acts 4:8, 9, 19. God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, when they in any respect clash with his written word. To obey men's unlawful commands, is to sin against God. But in our relation to God, we owe him both subjection and obedience in all things.

5. Let us remember then, that we owe a duty to God, and that is, that we obey his will. Let us therefore lay out ourselves to do his will, and give that sincere, constant, tender, ready, universal, and perfect obedience to him in all things which he requires, looking for acceptance with God through the merits and mediation of Christ; praying to him, that he may graciously forgive all our acts of disobedience, and cover our very imperfect and sinful obedience with

the perfect and complete obedience of his Son, who fulfilled all righteousness in the room of his people.

6. Lastly, Let believers be excited to yield this obedience to the will of God, as they have the most noble encouragement thereto, namely, that whatever God requires of them as an article of duty, there is a promise of ability and strength for the performance thereof contained in his word. Thus he says, Ezek. 36:27. 'I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.'—The Lord puts no piece of service in the hands of his people, but he will afford them sufficient supplies of grace for the doing thereof. Let them not, then, decline any duty he lays before them.

THE MORAL LAW, THE RULE OF MAN'S OBEDIENCE

ROM. 2:14, 15.—For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew 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.

THE apostle here shews three things. 1. That the Gentiles have not the law; that is, the law of Moses, or written law. They want the scriptures. 2. That yet they have a law within them, they are a law unto themselves; they have the natural law, which for substance is all one with the moral law. Only it is less clear and distinct, and wants the perfection of the moral law written: several points thereof being, through the corruption of nature, obliterated in it. 3. How they have it. It is not of their own making, nor by tradition, but they have it by nature derived from Adam. The work of that law is written in their hearts; it is deeply inscribed there, and cannot be erased; it is such a work as tells them what is right and what wrong; so their consciences, by virtue thereof, excuse their good actions, and accuse the evil.

Now, this natural law is nothing else but the rubbish of the moral law left in the heart of corrupt man: from whence we gather, that the moral law in its perfection was given to Adam in innocence, while we see the remains of it yet with those of his posterity, who have not the advantage of the written law.

The doctrine arising from the words is,

DOCT. 'The rule which God at first revealed to man for his obedience, was the moral law.

First, It is here supposed, that man always was and is under a law: for being a rational creature, capable of obeying the will of God, and owing obedience to his Creator by virtue of his natural dependence upon him, he behoved to be under a law. The beasts are not capable of government by a law, because of the imperfection of their nature: so those that will be lawless, seeing they cannot lift up themselves to the throne of God, who has no superior, they do in effect cast down themselves to the condition of beasts, whose appetite is all their rule. Indeed all the creatures are subjected to laws suitable to their various natures. Every thing has a law imprinted upon its being. The inanimate creatures, sun, moon, and stars, are under the law of providence, and under a covenant of night and day. Hence it is said, Psalm 148:6. 'He hath established them for ever and ever, he hath made a decree which shall not pass.' They have their courses and appointed motions, and keep to the just points of their compass. Even the sea, which is one of the most raging and tumultuous creatures, is subjected to a law. God hedges it in as it were with a girdle of sand, saying to it, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed,' Job 38:11. But much more are rational creatures subject to a law, seeing they are capable of election and choice. Man especially, being a rational creature, is capable of and fitted for government by a law; and seeing he is an accountable creature to God, he must needs be under a law.

Quest. How could man be under a law, before the law was given by Moses, for we are told, that the 'law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,' John 1:17?

Ans. Before the law was given at Sinai, all the race of Adam had a law written in their hearts, even the light of reason, and the dictates of natural conscience, which contained those moral principles concerning good and evil which have an essential equity in them, and the measures of his duty to God, to himself, and to his fellow-creatures. This was published by the voice of reason, and, as the apostle says, Rom. 7:12 was 'holy, just, and good:' Holy as it enjoins things holy, wherein there is a conformity to those attributes and

actions of God, which are the pattern of our imitation. Just; that is, exactly agreeable to the frame of man's faculties, and is most suitable to his condition in the world. Good; that is, beneficial to the observer of it; for, 'in keeping of it there was great reward.' And thus Adam in the state of innocence had the law of God written on his heart; and therefore it is said, Gen. 1:27 that 'God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.' This image consisted in the moral qualities and perfections of his soul. He was made after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness. The Lord imparted to him a spark of his own comeliness, in order to communicate with himself in happiness. This was an universal and entire rectitude in his faculties, disposing them to their proper operations. But of this I spoke largely, when discoursing of the creation of man.

Secondly, There are three sorts of laws we find in the word.

1. The ceremonial law, which was given by Moses. This bound only the Jews, and that to the coming of Christ, by whom it was abrogated, being a shadow of good things that were then to come: a hedge and partition-wall betwixt them and the Gentiles, which is now taken down.

2. The judicial law, which was the civil law of the Jews, given also first by Moses, by which their civil concerns were to be regulated, in respect of which the Jewish government was a Theocracy. What a happy people were they under such a government! Yet does it not bind other nations farther than it is of moral equity, being peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of that nation.

3. The moral law, which is the declaration of the will of God to mankind, binding all men to perfect obedience thereto in all the duties of holiness and righteousness. The ceremonial law was given to them as a church in their particular circumstances; the judicial law as a state; but the moral law was given them in common with all mankind. But of these laws I spoke more largely in a preceding discourse.

Thirdly, This moral law is found, 1. In the hearts of all men, as to some remains thereof, Rom. 2:15. There are common notions thereof, such as, That there is a God, and that he is to be worshipped; that we should give every one his due, &c. Conscience has that law with which it accuses for the commission of great crimes, Rom. 1 ult. This internal law appears from those laws which are common in all countries for the preserving of human societies, the encouraging of virtue, and the discouraging of vice. What standard else can they have for these laws but common reason? The design of them is to keep men within the bounds of goodness for mutual commerce. Every son of Adam brings with him into the world a law in his nature; and when reason clears up itself from the clouds of sense, he can make some difference between good and evil. Every man finds a law within him that checks him if he offends it. None are without a legal indictment, and a legal executioner, within them. This law is found, 2. In the ten commandments summarily. 3. In the whole Bible largely. This is that law which the carnal mind is enmity against in the natural man, which is written over again in the heart in regeneration, Heb. 8:10; and that was fulfilled by Christ in the room of the elect.

Fourthly, As to the revelation thereof, we may consider three special seasons thereof.

1. It was revealed to Adam in innocency, and to all mankind in him. Not by an audible voice, but it was written in his heart: the knowledge of it was concreated with his pure nature; his understanding was a lamp of light, whereby he plainly saw his duty as it was revealed to him.

Note, (1.) That it is a part of the moral natural law, that man is to believe whatever God shall reveal, and obey whatever he commands. Accordingly God did reveal to him the symbolical law of the forbidden fruit, for the trial of him; and then the law so extended was the rule of his duty.

(2.) God added to this law a promise of life upon obedience, and a threatening of death upon disobedience. So it was cast into the form of a covenant, called 'the covenant of works.' This prohibition was founded upon most wise and just grounds. As, first, to declare God's sovereign right in all things; and, next, to make trial of man's obedience in a matter very congruous to discover it. For if the prohibition had been grounded on any moral internal evil in the nature of the thing itself, there had not been so clear a testimony of God's dominion, nor of Adam's subjection to it. But when that which was in itself indifferent became unlawful, merely by the will of God, and when the command had no other excellency but to make his authority more sacred, this was a confining of man's liberty, and to abstain was pure obedience.

2. It was revealed to the Israelites again upon mount Sinai, in ten commandments. For Adam having fallen, and so man's nature being corrupted, the knowledge of this law was darkened, howsoever the godly patriarchs kept up the knowledge of it. But in Egypt they had lost much of the sense of it, which made it necessary to be renewed.

3. By Jesus Christ and his apostles, the law was again revealed to the world, the knowledge of it being then much lost among the Jews as well as the Gentiles. And now we have it comprehended in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

Fifthly, As to the properties of it, it is,

1. An universal law, binding all men, in all places, and at all times, Rom. 2:14, 15. For when the Gentiles, &c.

2. It is a perfect law, comprehending the whole of man's duty to God, and to his neighbour. There were no new duties added to it by Christ, for it was perfect before. So says the Psalmist, Psal. 19:7. 'The law of the Lord is perfect.'

3. It is indispensable and perpetual, Luke 16:17; 'It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail,' Matt. 5:18;

'Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.'

Lastly, For what use is the law revealed? I answer,

1. It was revealed at first, that man by obedience to it might be justified; but now it is not revealed for that end, seeing no man by obedience to it can obtain justification: For 'that the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh,' Rom. 8:3. 'Since the fall no mere man can attain happiness by the law; for all are guilty of sin, and cannot possibly yield that perfect obedience which the law requires. 'For there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not,' Eccl. 7:20. 'In many things we offend all.' Yet it is of use,

(1.) To all men in general. It is of a threefold use.

[1.] To let all men know what the holy will of God and their duty is, Micah 6:8. 'He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'

[2.] To let all see their inability to keep it, and so to humble them in the sense of their sin. 'By them,' says David, 'is thy servant warned. Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults,' Psal. 19:11, 12.

[3.] To give them a clear sense of their need of Christ. 'Wherefore serveth the law?' saith the apostle. 'It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made,' Gal. 3:19. And says the same apostle, ver. 24. 'The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.' And it brings men to Christ, (1.) As it convinceth them of their sin. The prohibitions of the law convince men of their sins of commission; and the injunctions of it convince them of their sins of omission. Hence says the apostle, Rom. 3:20. 'By the law is the knowledge of sin,' Rom. 7:7. 'I had not known sin but by the law,' &c. There are many things which men had never reckoned sins unless

the law of God had discovered them. (2.) By discovering unto them the dreadful wrath and curse of God that is due unto them for their sins. It tells them, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,' Gal. 3:10; (3.) By awakening their consciences under a sense of their guilt, and apprehensions of their misery, and begetting in them bondage and fear, whereby they are brought to a clearer sight of their need of Christ, and of the perfection of his obedience.

(2.) To the unregenerate: Particularly it is,

[1.] For a looking-glass to let them see their state and case, by convincing them, that 'by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in God's sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin,' Rom. 3:20; and so to bring them to Christ, who has wrought out a perfect righteousness for their justification.

[2.] For a bridle to hold them in with its commands and threatenings, who otherwise would regard nothing. 'The law (says the apostle) is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners,' &c. 1 Tim. 1:9.

[3.] For a scourge, vexing and tormenting their consciences, and making them uneasy in a sinful course, rendering them inexcusable, and laying them under the curse.

(3.) To them that are in Christ. It serves,

[1.] To magnify Christ unto them, shewing them their obligation to him for fulfilling it in their stead. 'O wretched man that I am! (says the apostle); who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,' Rom. 7:24, 25. 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith,' Gal. 3:13, 14.

[2.] To be a rule of life unto them, wherein they may express their gratitude by obeying the law of Christ. So the law leads to Christ as a Redeemer from its curse and condemnation, and he leads back to the law as a directory, the rule and standard of their obedience to him.

Object. But does not the apostle say, Rom. 6:14. 'Ye are not under the law but under grace?' and Gal. 5:22, 23. 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, &c.—against such there is no law?'

Ans. Believers are not under the law as a covenant of works, to be either justified or condemned thereby. For the apostle says, 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,' Gal. 3:13; and that there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' They are neither under the commanding nor the condemning power of that law, seeing Christ has given perfect obedience to it as a covenant of works, so that under that character it can have nothing to demand of them; and has fully satisfied all its demands in point of punishment, having suffered the very penalty threatened therein. So that as a covenant of works they are entirely delivered from it. And as to the fruits of the Spirit in them, they are the product of the Spirit, agreeable to the will and law of God; and no law can be against them, seeing they are agreeable to the very letter and spirit thereof. But believers are still under the law as a rule of life, according to which they are to regulate their hearts and lives. It is the pole star that must direct their course to heaven, and is of singular use to provoke and excite them to gratitude to Christ, who hath perfectly fulfilled it in their room and stead.

I shall conclude with drawing a few inferences from what has been said.

Inf. 1. That the Pope is Antichrist, and that man of sin, who shews himself as if he were God, by commanding things contrary to and inconsistent with the moral law, 2 Thess. 2:3, 4. The Papists add canons and traditions to the moral law, as if it were in itself an imperfect rule of manners. This is taxing God's wisdom and

goodness, as if he knew not to make his own laws, or would not give a sufficient and complete rule to his creatures. This is a provoking sin in the sight of God; and a most dangerous thing it is to add to or impair his holy law. See Rev. 22:18, 19.

2. Is the moral law the rule of our obedience to which we ought to conform ourselves in heart and conversation? Then what ground of reproof is there here to many among you! Are there not many who cast God's words behind their backs, and trample upon his commandments? Some set up their carnal wisdom, as the standard and rule of their actions, and regulate themselves by the dictates of their corrupt reason. Others subject themselves to the law of their lusts and passions. They study to fulfil the desires of their fleshly mind, and to gratify their sensual appetite; but have no regard to the holy law of God. They break all these cords, and cast all the divine commands from them. This their way is their great sin and folly, exposes them to the wrath of God, and sooner or later will bring down Heaven's vengeance on their guilty heads.

3. It is necessary that the law be preached, in order to convince men of their sin, and inability to yield perfect obedience to it, that they may betake themselves to Jesus Christ, who hath fulfilled all righteousness for every one that will come to him for deliverance from sin and the wrath to come. It is necessary to be studied and known by all who would attain to true holiness both in heart and life, which principally lies in a sincere and upright obedience to the whole law of God, in dependence upon the grace that is in Jesus Christ. The law is a lamp to their feet, and a light to their path; and the more they study it in its spirituality and extent, the more vigorously will they press after conformity to it.

4. Let us remember we are under a law in whatever case we be; and therefore our actions are a seed that will have a proportionable harvest. And there will be a day of judgment wherein every man's works and actions will be narrowly examined. Let us therefore study to conform ourselves to the holy law of God, being holy as God is

holy, and exercising ourselves to keep consciences void of offence both towards God and towards man.

THE MORAL LAW SUMMARILY COMPREHENDED IN THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

MATTH. 19:17.—If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments.

THIS is Christ's answer to a self-justiciary, who expected life by the works of the law. Christ, to convince him of his folly, sends him to the law, saying, If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

There are only two things which I take notice of here for our purpose. 1. That by the commandments are understood the ten commandments, ver. 18 where several of them are specified. 2. That under these commandments he comprehends the whole moral law; for this resolution of the young man's question is founded on that, Gal. 3:12. 'The man that doth them shall live in them;' compared with ver. 10. 'For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse.' The man had deceived himself in taking the commandments only according to the letter, and therefore thought he had kept them; but Christ finds him out new work in these commandments, which he had not thought of.

The doctrine I observe from the text is,

DOCT. 'The moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments.'

In discoursing from this subject, I shall shew,

I. How the commandments were given.

II. Why the law was thus given and renewed.

III. How the moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commands.

IV. Apply.

I. I shall shew how the moral law or ten commandments, were given. There are ten commandments, not more nor fewer, as appears from Deut. 10:4 where they are expressly called ten. And therefore the papists, who in some sort leave out the second, split the tenth into two, to make up the number. They were given to the Israelites after they came out of their Egyptian bondage; for they that cast off Satan's yoke, must take on the Lord's. They were given two ways.

1. By an audible voice from the Lord on mount Sinai, accompanied with great terror. Never was law given in such a solemn manner, with such dread and awful majesty, Exod. 19 Deut. 4:5. Heb. 12:18. The people were commanded to wash their clothes before the law was delivered to them. By this, as in a type, the Lord required the sanctifying of their ears and hearts to receive it. There were bounds and limits set to the mount, that it might breed in the people dread and reverence to the law, and to God the holy and righteous Lawgiver. There were great thunderings and lightnings. The artillery of heaven was shot off at that solemnity, and therefore it is called 'a fiery law.' The angels attended at the delivery of this law. The heavenly militia, to speak so, were all mustered out on this important occasion. In a word, the law was promulgated with the marks of supreme majesty; God by all this shewing how vain a thing it is for sinners to expect life by the works of the law; and thereby also shewing the necessity of a Mediator.

2. The ten commandments were written on two tables of stone, and that by the finger of God himself. This writing them on stone might hold out the perpetuity of that law, and withal the hardness of men's

hearts. There were two tables that were given to Moses, written immediately by God himself, Exod. 31 ult. These Moses brake, chap. 32:16, 19; plainly holding out the entertainment they would get amongst men. Then other two tables were hewn by Moses, yet written by the finger of God, chap. 34:1; for by the law is the sinner hewed, but by the spirit of gospel-grace is the law written on the heart. These two tables were afterwards laid up in the ark of the covenant, in order to be fulfilled by Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. This writing of the law upon tables of stone is justly supposed to have been the first writing in the world; and therefore this noble and useful invention was of divine origin, and the foundation of all Moses's after writings, which have been so useful to the church in all ages.

II. I shall shew, why the law was thus given and renewed.

1. For the confirmation of the natural law. For though there was no need of such a confirmation of the law while man stood, yet such was the darkness of the mind, the rebellion of the will, and disorder of the affections and other faculties, that there remained only some relics of it, which that they might not also be lost, the ten commandments were given.

2. That the same might be corrected in those things wherein it was corrupted by the fall, or defective. And indeed there was great need of it in this respect. For the law of nature in man's corrupt state is very defective. For,

(1.) It cannot carry a man to the first cause of all his misery, even Adam's first sin, and discover the evils of lust and concupiscence that lurk in his heart. Mere natural light can never teach a man to feel the weight and curse of a sin committed some thousands of years before he was born, or to mourn for that filthiness, which he contracted in his conception, and for those sproutings of sin in his nature. The apostle tells us, that this cannot be learned without the law, Rom.

7:7. 'I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet.'

(2.) The law of nature is defective, because natural Judgment is thoroughly distorted and infatuated, so that it is ready to reckon evil good, and good evil, light darkness and darkness light. Nature is ready to dictate unto men, that they are 'rich and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing; while in the mean time they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.'

(3.) It is defective, because it doth not drive men out of themselves for a remedy. The sublimest philosophy that ever was did never teach a man to deny himself, but always taught him to build up his house with the old ruins, and to fetch stores and materials out of the wonted quarry. Shame, humiliation, confusion of face, self-aborrence, condemning ourselves, and flying to the righteousness of another, are virtues known only in the book of God, and which the learned philosophers would have esteemed both irrational and pusillanimous things.

(4.) It is defective, because by nature in particular men never knew nor had experience of a better state, and therefore must needs be ignorant of that full image of God in which it was created. As a man born and brought up in a dungeon is unable to conceive the state of a palace; or as the child of a nobleman stolen away, and brought up by some beggar, cannot conceive or suspect the honours of his blood; so corrupted nature is utterly unable, that has been born in a womb of ignorance, bred in a hell of uncleanness, and enthralled from the beginning to the prince of darkness, to conceive, or convince a man of, that most holy and pure condition in which he was created.

3. To supply what was wanting in it, being obliterated by sin. In the ages before Moses, the Lord's extraordinary appearances and revelations were more frequent, and the lives of men were much longer, than they were afterwards. In Moses's time they were reduced to seventy, or little more. These aged patriarchs transmitted

the knowledge of the law and men's duty to their descendents; and by this means it was handed down from father to son; but by degrees men's lives were shortened, and following generations were involved in ignorance of God and his law. Therefore, to supply this defect, and to prevent the knowledge of it from utterly perishing, was the law promulgated at Sinai.

4. To evince and convince of the necessity of a Mediator, the people that saw not this defect. When the law was thus given anew, and men saw their utter incapacity to fulfil it, by giving that due obedience it required, they would come, through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, to see the necessity of a Mediator for satisfying the law, both as to its command and penalty.

III. I shall shew how the law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments. To be summarily comprehended in a thing, is to be summed up in it, to be abridged and compendised as it were. The commandment is exceeding broad, and runs through the whole Bible; but we have a summary or short view of it in the ten commands given by the Lord on Mount Sinai. The ten commandments are the heads of all the duties of the law largely contained in the whole Bible. They are the text which Christ himself, the prophets, and apostles expounded. They comprehend the whole duty of man, Eccl. 12:13. There is nothing that God requires but may be reduced to one of these commandments. So faith is a duty of the first command, as it obliges men to believe whatever God reveals. The first commandment concerns the object of worship, requiring us to know and acknowledge God to be the true God, and our God, and to worship and glorify him as such, in heart and life. The second relates to the means of worship, requiring us to receive, observe, and keep pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his word. The third respects the holy and reverend use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, words, and works. The fourth requires us to sanctify the Sabbath, that day which he hath set apart for his own worship and service. The fifth relates to the duties we owe to one another in our several places and

relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals. The sixth requires the preservation of our own life and that of others. The seventh respects the preservation of our own and our neighbour's chastity, in heart, speech, and behaviour. The eighth relates to the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others. The ninth requires the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, especially in witness-bearing. And the tenth requires us to be contented with our own condition, and to have a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbour and all that is his. And every commandment forbids whatever is opposite to or inconsistent with what it requires.

As to the rules necessary to be observed for the right understanding of the ten commandments, the following things are to be noticed.

1. They respect not only the outward actions, but the inward motions of the heart. The law is spiritual, and so reaches the inward as well as the outward man. It reaches the understanding, will, and affections, and all the other powers and faculties of the soul, as well as our words, works, and gestures. The law is spiritual, Rom. 7:14 reaching the heart as well as the life; and therefore we ought to study conformity to it in both. The lawgiver is a spirit, and beholds all the motions and inclinations of the soul, as well as the actions of the body; and is grieved and offended with the impurities of the heart, as well as with the enormities of the life; and therefore he requires an internal obedience, as well as an outward conformity to his will. The law extends to the imagination, that most roving and unstable faculty in man, and to dreams that are bred there.

But some may say, What is to be thought of men's dreaming that they are breaking God's commandments, e. g. profaning the Sabbath-day, swearing, lying, &c. while really they are fast asleep, are not doing so, nor opening their mouths, &c.?

Ans. No doubt it is sin, and will damn thee if it be not pardoned, and washed away by the blood of Christ: For, (1.) The scripture condemns

it. Hence the apostle, Jude. 8 speaks of 'filthy dreams that defile the flesh.' (2.) The consent of the heart unto sin, the delectation that it finds in it, makes a man guilty; and the soul is always a rational agent, and this consent is given to these temptations in sleep. (3.) A man when awake thinking what he doth is sinful, though upon the matter it be not, yet it is sin to him; e. g. a man taking his own goods, which yet he thinks are another man's, is guilty of theft before God: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. So is it in this case. (4.) As these things arise from corrupt nature, so readily they follow on some such motions that people have been taken up with them awake, or from a loose, carnal, and secure frame. They are looked on as sinful by tender consciences. (5.) As men may do something pleasing to God in a dream, so may they do something to displease him, 2 Kings 3:5. (6.) The law impressed upon the heart is designed to keep it even in sleep, Prov. 6:22, 23. 'When thou sleepest, it shall keep thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light.' But ye may say, What if a man has been watching against these things, praying against them, &c. and yet in sleep falls into them? I answer, It is still sinful, in so far as the heart complies with the diabolical suggestion; and the truth is, by grace temptation is sometimes resisted in sleep, as well as when we are awake.

2. The commandments require perfection. No partial obedience can be admitted or sustained. The least defect is fatal, and exposes to the curse. This ought to be seriously considered, that we may see our need of Christ's blood and righteousness, to cover and atone for our obedience, and all its defects.

3. Whatever sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded; and where any duty is commanded, the contrary vice is forbidden. For instance, when God forbids us to have any other gods before him, he at the same time commands us to worship and adore him, the only living and true God. When he forbids the profanation of his name, he requires that esteem and reverence should be given to it.—When he forbids to steal, he commands the preservation of our neighbour's goods, by all the means that are lawful and proper for us to use.

When he forbids us to kill, he commands love to our neighbour, and the preservation of his life by all lawful means. On the other hand, when God requires us to remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy, he forbids the forgetting and profanation of it. When he commands us to honour our parents, he forbids us to be undutiful or injurious to them. And indeed the nature of the thing itself requires this: for the duties enjoined by the law cannot be performed without shunning the vices which it forbids; and the sins forbidden by the law cannot be avoided, unless the contrary virtues enjoined by it are performed. —This shews the insufficiency of negative holiness; for we must not only do what the law forbids, but perform what it requires; otherwise no obedience is given to it at all.

4. Under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden and commanded: For instance, when the Lord forbids us to kill, he forbids us also to beat and wound our neighbour; and all envy, malice, and revenge, are forbidden at the same time. When he forbids to commit adultery, he forbids also incest, fornication, and all unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections. When he forbids to steal, he forbids rapine, robbery, and all deceitful dealing by false weights and unjust measures. On the other hand, when the Lord commands to have no other god but himself, he commands us to love him, to reverence, worship, and adore him. When he commands us to remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy, he commands us to make conscience of the duties of his worship and service. When he commands us to love our neighbour, he commands us to do all the good offices unto him which are in our power to perform. And when any sin is forbidden, all means and things leading thereto are forbidden. And so gross actions are named, not to pass over lesser ones, but to make them more abominable, while we see how God looks on them, giving them such gross names.

5. The prohibition of the effect includes also the prohibition of the cause, from which the effect flows. For instance, when the Lord forbids the profanation of the Sabbath, he forbids also all those works by which the Sabbath may be profaned. When he forbids

uncleanness he forbids intemperance, drunkenness, gluttony, and whatever may incite thereunto. When he forbids us to kill, he forbids anger and wrath, malice and revenge, from which bloodshed does oft-times proceed. On the other hand, when the law requires chastity, it enjoins also temperance and sobriety, and diligence in those particular callings wherein God has placed men in the world, their being means and helps thereunto, and the source as it were from whence they proceed.

6. The precepts of the second table of the law must yield to those of the first, when they cannot be both performed together. For instance our love to our neighbour must be subjected to our love to God; yea, we are commanded to hate father and mother for Christ, Luke 14:26. When our love to our parents and relations comes in competition with our love to Christ, and is inconsistent with it, then we are not bound unto it: and when the commands of men run cross to the commands of God, then God is to be obeyed rather than men, as the apostles shew, Acts 4:19.

7. Whatever God forbids in his law is at no time lawful to be done; and whatever he commands is always our duty. Therefore it is said, Deut. 4:9. 'Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life.' Yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times: for there are many duties enjoined us which suppose certain conditions; and if these be wanting, there is no place for the performance of the duties. For instance, we are commanded to honour our parents; but this supposeth they are alive or present with us, or else there can be no place for that duty. But whatever vices are forbidden in God's law, they are at no time lawful to be done. The negative precepts bind us always, and at all times. We are continually to shun and avoid every thing that is evil.

8. Whatever is forbidden or commanded with respect to ourselves, we are bound, according to our places and stations, to endeavour that it may be avoided or performed by others, according to the duty

of their places. Hence it is said, Exod. 20:10. 'The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, &c.

I shall conclude with a few practical inferences from this subject.

Inf. 1. This doctrine lets us see that the rule of man's obedience is not wrapt up in darkness and shades, is not ambiguous, or hard to be understood. The rule is not far-fetched, and to be found out by hard study and laborious inquiry. No; it is plain and obvious to the common sense and reason of mankind. It is contained in ten plain words, and explained and illustrated in every book of the Bible. Nay, it is in some measure written on the hearts of all men; every son and daughter of Adam has some remains of it written on their hearts, which all the boisterous and dashing waves of corruption have never been able to efface. We may say of it, as the apostle does of the gospel, The rule of thy obedience, O man, 'is nigh thee, even in thy heart and in thy mouth.' So that it is in vain to pretend ignorance of this rule. All pretences of ignorance in this matter are mere affectation, and most unaccountable.

2. What matter of regret is it, that in a land of light, where the Bible is, which contains in it this rule of obedience, and enforces it with the strongest motives, people should be so ignorant of what is so much their interest and advantage to know! They are wofully ignorant of both the law of God, and the spirituality and extent thereof; and pay no manner of respect to it in their heart or practice.

3. The law is perfect, and requires a full conformity thereto. It requires the utmost perfection in every duty, and forbids the least degree of every sin. So that life and salvation are absolutely unattainable by it, since no man can perform such an obedience to it as it requires. Our salvation is suspended in obedience to the law; which since we cannot perform, let us be induced to betake ourselves to the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, by which the law is

magnified and made honourable, and with which God is well pleased; and will be pleased with every sinner that takes the benefit thereof.

4. The commandment is exceeding broad, reaching to every motion, desire, and affection of the heart, as well as to every action we perform. It is a rule both for our hearts and our lives. Let us then study to know this holy law of God in its spirituality and extent, and yield that obedience to it which it requires; sincere, flowing from right principles in the heart, and directed to right ends; universal, in respect of parts, without mincing; cheerful, in respect of the manner; and constant and perpetual, as to the duration. And the Lord give us understanding in all things, to know and do our duty, to the glory of his name.

LOVE TO GOD AND OUR NEIGHBOUR, THE SUM OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

MATTH. 22:37, 38, 39.—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. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

MARK 12:30.—Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,—with all thy strength.

THIS is an answer made by our Lord to a captious question put to him by a learned scribe. If Christ had pitched on any particular command of the ten, the lawyer, for so the querist is called, would certainly have excepted in some other, and accused him of villifying some other commands; but Christ gives the summary of both tables

of the law, yea, of the whole scriptures touching a holy life: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, &c. In which words may be noticed,

1. The sum of the first table of the law that is, love to the Lord, and that such love is superior and transcendent; such love as gives the whole man to the Lord, with all the strength of all the powers of soul and body.

2. The sum of the second table; that is, love to our neighbour, and that such love as we bear to ourselves, (but not as to God,) sincere and constant.

3. Christ compares the two together, shewing that love to God is the command first to be looked unto, and by which the other is regulated, whether as to loving ourselves or our neighbour. The second is like unto it, as having the same authority, and must be joined with the first, and is the fountain of acceptable obedience to the second-table commands, as the first is the true spring of acceptable obedience to the first table duties.

4. He shews the whole law and the doctrine of the prophets, touching holiness, to depend on these as the sum of all.

The doctrine arising from the words is,

DOCT. 'The sum of the ten commandments is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbour as ourselves.'

The sum of all the commands (ye see) is love. So the ten commandments are the law of love; they are a law that is chiefly conversant about the heart, which is the seat of love. The scope of them is to unite men to God and to one another; for there is no such cement of hearts as holiness.

The text and doctrine consists of two parts.

I. The sum of the first table of the law is love to God.

II. The sum of the second is love to our neighbour.

I. The sum of the first table of the law is love to God.

Here I shall shew,

1. The ingredients of this love to God, whereof it is made up.

2. The properties of it.

3. Why this love is due to God.

4. How love to the Lord stands in relation to other commands.

5. Lastly, Apply.

First, I shall shew the ingredients of this love to God, whereof it is made up.

1. Knowledge of him. An unseen but not an unknown God can be loved with all the heart, soul, strength, and mind. Ignorant souls cannot love God; what the eye sees not, the heart likes not: Hell fire may have heat without light: but all heavenly fire has light as well as heat. Thou must know God. (1.) Who he is to wit, the Lord Jehovah, the one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. These are the object of divine love. (2.) What he is in his attributes, as an infinite, eternal and unchangeable Being. Comprehend him ye cannot, but apprehend him ye must, as he has revealed himself. And so when love is shed abroad in the heart, the vail is first taken from the eyes.

2. Chusing him for our God, our chief good and portion, Psal. 73:25. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.' Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart. If we love him not above all, we do not truly love him; if we chuse him

not for our portion, we love him not above all. The soul that loves the Lord, sees that in him which may satisfy it, nothing out of him that is necessary to make the soul happy. Hence it does, by choice, take up its everlasting rest in him, and finds a match to itself in him.

3. Cleaving to him as our God: Love the Lord thy God. Love is a uniting thing; it makes the soul cleave to the object. Thou must cleave to the Lord, to his ways, word, &c. Not to be separated from him by whatsoever wedge the devil or the world may drive. Not to be bribed from him, nor boasted either, Cant. 8:7. 'Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.' And cleave to him as thy God; for so he will be loved. He must be thy God, before thou canst love him aright. Thus was it with Adam, and Christ; and thus it is with believers.

Hence it is evident, (1.) That faith is the first spring of all true obedience. There is no obedience but from love, no love but from faith, whereby God becomes our God.—How can it otherwise be? for although God is in himself the chief good, if he be not ours, the more perfect Being he is, the more terrible an enemy he is.

(2.) The way prescribed by God himself for us to attain love to him, is to apprehend him by faith to be our God; which now can be no otherwise but by faith in Christ. So that to love God, that he may love us, is a preposterous method. But let us labour to embrace Christ, and so to believe God loves us in him; then shall the heart natively flow out in love to him, 1 John 4:19; 'We love him, because he first loved us.'

4. High thoughts and a transcendent esteem of him, Cant. 5:10. 'My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.' He is the best of beings, the most amiable and lovely, that shines with unparalleled perfections; and therefore is to have the supreme place in our estimation as well as affections. Here our esteem cannot go too high, more than we can reach beyond what is infinite. We cannot launch out too far in admiration of his glory. Thus should we highly

and honourably think of him as the best and greatest. It is a sad character of the wicked man, Psal. 10:4 that 'God is not in all his thoughts.'

5. Desire towards him, Psal. 73:25. Whatever other desires we have, the main stream of our desires must run towards the Lord, Psal. 27:4 to the enjoyment of him in this life, and the perfect enjoyment of him hereafter; so that God not being perfectly enjoyed here, it is natural to the lovers of God to desire to 'be with Christ,' Phil. 1:23; 2 Thess. 3:5.

6. Lastly, Complacency in him, Cant. 1:13. The soul must delight in him, have a pleasure in him. The lover of the Lord is well pleased there is such a being, well pleased with all his attributes, all his relations to us, all his words, ways, and works. And the want of this makes men haters of God in the scripture-sense.

Secondly, I shall shew the properties of this love required of us. It is,

1. Sincere, not in word and tongue only, shewing much love, Prov. 23:26, but inwardly, our hearts being with him, to him, and for him.

2. Most strong and vigorous, even as much as we are capable of, all the strength we are masters of. Love may be sincere, though not most intense, and that the gospel may accept: but the law requires a perfection of degrees as well as of parts. The greatest fervour of affection is due to God, and the greatest ardency of love, beyond which we cannot go.

3. Pure and absolute for himself. Not that we are not to love God as our benefactor, Psal. 116:11 but we must love him also and mainly for those excellencies that are in him, Cant. 1:3 for his truth, justice, mercy, holiness, &c.

4. A superlative and transcendent love. We must love God above all creatures whatsoever, ourselves or others, Luke 14:26. And so must

all other loves be swallowed up in his; we must love nothing beside him, but for him, and in due subordination to him.

5. An intelligent love, Mark 12:33. We must love him as those that see good cause to love him. There is no blindness in this love; for there are no faults in the object to be hid; but the better we see, the more we love.

6. Lastly, An efficacious working love, 1 John 3:18. Therefore says the apostle, Rom. 13:10. 'Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore 'love is the fulfilling of the law.' Love devotes the whole man to God, to serve his glory in the world, Rom. 14:7, 8 and makes him ready to forego what is dearest to him in the world for God, Acts 20:24 and sets a man on doing and suffering at his call.

Thirdly, I will shew why this love is due to God. It is due because of his transcendent excellency, and absolute loveliness. There is nothing in him but what is good; all goodness is in him, and nothing wanting; and each part of goodness is in him infinitely. No love, then, is suitable to him but such a love. There is nothing lovely in the creatures, but what is eminently in him, Matth. 19:17; but there is something wanting in all the creatures, that must stint our love.

Fourthly, I shall shew how love to the Lord stands in relation to other commands.

1. It is the chief duty. It is what God mainly requires, and what we ought mainly to aim at. It is the end, to which even faith itself is but the mean, and in that respect is by the apostle preferred to all others, 1 Cor. 13.

2. It is the comprehensive duty of all, Rom. 13:10. As is our love, so will our obedience be. Were our love perfect, our obedience would be so too. It is the fruitful womb out of which proceed all other duties.

3. It is an universal duty; it goes through all. Whatever acceptable service we do, must be done in love; and if it be not done so, it is not

accepted. Other duties are the meat, but this is the salt to season all.

Fifthly, I shall deduce some inferences from what has been said.

Inf. 1. What a sweet law is the law of God, that law of love! how rational! how drawing! Did ever prince make a law for his subjects to love him? But God has made such a law: and all his loyal subjects cheerfully obey it, and find their advantage in it.

2. See the excellency of the love of God. The whole law is comprised in love. Would ye have the most short way to obedience? then love the Lord. Take a hold of this master-link, and ye will draw the whole chain after you. He that loveth God, will keep his commandments; for love is the fulfilling of the law.

3. How little obedience or true holiness is there in the world? for how little love to God is there? Alas for the cold hearts that make benumbed hands and feet! Did men love God as he deserves and requires to be loved, could they break his commandments, and live in such carelessness and unconcern about God and his laws, and the important concerns of their souls, as the generality do? Alas! the coldness of professors in the cause of God, is a melancholy evidence that love to him is at a low ebb amongst us.

4. What an absurd thing is the device of supererogating, and doing more than the law requires? We are required to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind? Is it possible to go further than that? Nay, can any man attain to such a perfect love? No person that truly loves God can possibly think he exceeds the pitch of loving him required in the law. On the contrary, it is matter of grief to him that he cannot love him enough. Any measure he has attained proves unsatisfying. He will still desire and labour to have his love more increased, and rendered more lively and intense. So far will he be from imagining he loves God more than it is his duty to do.

5. There is no true religion where there is no heart-religion: and there is no respect to the law, where there is no love. It is in vain for

men to pretend to be religious, while they have no principle of love to God implanted and operating in their hearts. External obedience is of no avail without internal, founded upon and proceeding from love to God as its source. All true obedience is the fruit of love to God; and where love prevails in the heart, there will be a sincere respect to God's commandments, to his word, his ordinances, and institutions.

6. Let us all be induced to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind: esteeming and preferring him above all other things, acquisitions, possessions, and enjoyments; giving him the chief room in our hearts, delighting and resting in him as our chief good and upmaking portion; desiring to be more and more acquainted with him, and ardently longing to have copious manifestations of his love and grace made to ourselves; and in a sincere respect to all his laws, statutes, and precepts. And let us be ready to part with all we have, all our enjoyments and possessions, however valuable and dear they may be to us; at the Lord's call and command, whenever we can keep them no longer in a consistency with our love to God and his cause. We must forsake all to follow Christ; and lay down our life, rather than not love the Lord our God.

I now proceed to consider the second part of the text and doctrine, viz.

II. The sum of the second table of the law is love to our neighbour.

In discoursing from this point, I shall shew,

1. Who is our neighbour.
2. What is that love we owe to our neighbour.
3. How we are to love our neighbour.
4. Lastly, Apply the point.

First, I am to shew who is our neighbour. Every man is our neighbour, known or unknown, friend or foe, good or bad, Luke 10:29, 37. This neighbourhood is founded on two things especially. 1. That common relation that is among all as branches of one stock, having one common nature, Acts 17:26. 2. The common capacity of all to enjoy the same God, and to meet in him; all men being capable of that happiness, because of their immortal souls capable of enjoying an infinite good. Hence see,

1. How the hatred of evil men and love to them may be reconciled, Psalm 139:21. 'Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? Compare the text, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. We have the common grounds aforementioned whereon to love all men; but forasmuch as sin is a depravation of that common nature, and the only thing that mars men's enjoyments of God, we hate their sins, though we love their persons; as we hate the moth, because we love the garment. Hatred to men's persons, whoever or whatever they be, is inconsistent with this command that enjoins the love of our neighbour as well as the love of God. But to hate and abhor their sins and evil deeds, is quite consistent with love to their persons. And agreeably to this, David's hatred to those who hated God, ultimately terminated on their sins, and not their persons.

2. We see here a ground whereon we ought to love our enemies. Their common nature with us, and their common capacity of happiness with us in the enjoyment of God, remains, though they do evil to us; and therefore we are bid pray for them, Matth. 5:44. '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*.

Secondly, I shall shew what is that love we owe to our neighbour. In it there is,

1. A due esteem of him, 1 Pet. 2:17. 'Love the brotherhood.' There are no persons but who have something for which they are to be esteemed. Some have grace, all have gifts, natural or moral, in greater or less measure, which are from God, James 1:17. None want precious souls, that are of more worth and value than the world. And the pearl must be esteemed precious, though in a dunghill.

2. Benevolence or good-will to them, Luke 6:31. 'As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.' We are heartily to desire their welfare for time and eternity, to wish them the best things. This good affection we are to bear to all. And this brings in with it a sorrow for the evil that befalls them, and joy in their good and prosperity.

3. Beneficence, doing them what good we can, doing to them as we would be done to, Matth. 7:12. Gal. 4:10. We are not born for ourselves, but for God and our neighbour; and therefore we should lay out ourselves to be useful in the world and to advance the good of mankind, so far as we are capable.

4. Complacency, or delight in them, so far as any good thing appears in them, 1 Pet. 2:17. 'Honour all men.' This doth in a special manner belong to the saints, those excellent ones, in whom should be all our delight, Psal. 16:3. Yet a delight in the good gifts of God in any man, and their amiable qualities and dispositions, is our duty.

Thirdly, I shall shew, how we are to love our neighbor: As yourselves, says the text. Here two things are to be noticed.

1. That there is an allowable self-love, a love that we may and ought to bear to ourselves; for that is the rule of love to our neighbour. We are to love our own bodies, by all lawful means to see to their welfare. For, says the apostle, Eph. 5:29. 'No man ever yet hated his own flesh: but nourisheth and cherisheth it.' And we are to love our own souls, by all means to endeavour their salvation, and to beware of all that may obstruct it. For, says wisdom, Prov. 8:36. 'He that sinneth

against me, wrongeth his own soul.' We are to love ourselves in God, and for God; for he and not man's self, is his chief end. This becomes sinful self-love, when it does not remain in due subordination to the love of God, or destroys love to our neighbour.

2. In what sense we are to love our neighbour as ourselves? This hath a respect both to the matter and to the manner. As to the matter, this likeness lies chiefly in three things.

(1.) That we neither wish evil, nor do evil to our neighbour, more than to ourselves. (2.) That we wish all good to our neighbour as to ourselves, and be ready to do all we can to procure and further it. (3.) That we desire these things to our neighbour, out of a true respect to him, and his advantage, not our own.

As to the manner, (1.) We must love our neighbour as truly and really as we love ourselves. No man feigns a love to himself: so must our love to others be unfeigned, not like the devouring lips, and the wicked heart.

(2.) Earnestly, as we love ourselves, without coldness and remissness, Matt. 24:12. This is a fire that should never slacken, but burn intensely.

(3.) Constantly, without changing. Though they be not so favourable to us at all times, yet we are still to love them as ourselves. Our love to them must not be suspended on their love to us, and the effects of it: but it must glow to them, even though we meet with ungrateful returns.

Fourthly, I shall now draw some inferences from this point, the loving of our neighbour as ourselves.

Inf. 1. Great need have we to have our self-love rectified. For, as when the rule is wrong, nothing can be right that is regulated by it; so, when our love to ourselves is wrong, we cannot rightly love our

neighbour. This is the love of companions in sin, who involve themselves and one another in one common ruin.

2. All the commands of the second table have respect to ourselves in the first place as our nearest neighbour. Thus, 'Thou shalt not kill' that is, thou shalt not kill thyself nor thy neighbour. So the duties of religion are reduced to these three, to 'live soberly, righteously, and godly,' Tit. 2:12.

3. Hatred of our neighbour is an universal sin against the commands of the second table; as love to our neighbour is the chief, comprehensive, and universal duty of the second table, so is the hatred of our neighbour, the chief, comprehensive, and universal sin against that table.

4. Several persons are reproveable here.

(1.) Those that in effect do not love themselves, but go on in sinful courses, ruining to their bodies, and ruining to their souls; who treat themselves as the wont of enemies. Men must answer to God for this; for their souls and their bodies are not their own, but the Lord's.

(2.) Those that love themselves only, and not their neighbours; who value not how it be with others, if it go well with themselves; and can comfortably build up themselves on the ruin of others. All seek their own things. This is a most base and selfish disposition, destructive of society, and very offensive to God.

(3.) Those that love some of their neighbours, but not all. One will say, Such an one is my enemy; be it so, but yet love to him is law; and his enmity against you cannot dissolve the obligation of the law of God to love him. Love him that he may be thy friend; love him, but not his faults. The more need he has of thy love, that he may be reclaimed; as we run to the physician for love to the man, not to his disease. The loving and shewing love to one that is our enemy, is the fairest and readiest way to reclaim and gain him. If any thing will do it, this is the most sensible means.

(4.) Those that love in word, but hate in heart; that love like Joab and Judas: they that speak fair to a man's face, but would cut his throat behind his back. Such a practice is abominable hypocrisy, odious to God, and nauseous to every honest man.

(5.) Those that pretend to love their neighbour, but their love is fruitless; their neighbour is never the better of it. They say they love such a one; but they never give him good counsel, though he stands in need of it; they do him no service, though it be in their power, and his circumstances require it. Such love is all pretence, without substance or reality.

6. Lastly, They that do not love the Lord's people, who are their best neighbours, the substance and strength of a church and nation, who are, as Elijah was, 'the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.' Love is a duty to them above all men, for what they are in themselves, lovers of God, and all good men, and for the relation they stand in to God, as his people, his redeemed, and sanctified ones, who when the time of their warfare here is accomplished, shall be translated to the kingdom of glory, to the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Not to love them is a great sin, inconsistent with the law and love of God; and to hate them, especially on account of their goodness, is direct rebellion against God, an insult to the Majesty of heaven, whose subjects and servants they are.

5. Let us study to love our neighbour, and to bury all strifes, animosities, hatred, and malice. For motives, consider,

(1.) That little love to our neighbour is a sad sign of little love to God, 1 John 4:20. 'If a man Say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?'

(2.) Consider the bond of one common nature, which should cement and knit together all of the same species.—Lions and Wolves do not

prey on their own kind, but shew kindness to one another. As men are of one common nature derived from Adam, should they not love and shew kindness to one another? for they are strictly brethren, and are as strictly bound to love one another as such.

(3.) Consider the love of God and Christ to men. It was most free unmerited, unsought, and unsolicited. They loved not friends but enemies and rebels, who had taken up arms against their Creator and Sovereign Lord. Men had by their sin involved themselves in utter ruin, and could not help themselves. In such deplorable circumstances did God fix his love on them, and send his Son to redeem them from the curse of the law, and from the wrath to come, by laying down his life for them. And shall not such a glorious and unspeakable instance of the love of the great God, and his Son Jesus Christ, to the ruined race of fallen man, excite and stir us up to love our neighbour, and to do him all the service we can, both as to his temporal and eternal interests?

Lastly, How happy would the world be if men loved others as themselves? Suppose ten men; so love would contract ten into one, and multiply one into ten. How happy would each of these ten be, who would have ten hearts to care for him, twenty eyes to see for him, twenty hands to work for him, and twenty feet to travel for him!

Let the Lord's people especially love one another. They are the Sons of God, and the brethren of Christ. God loved them with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness he drew them to himself. Christ redeemed them at no less price than that of his most precious blood. The Holy Spirit is their Sanctifier and Comforter, and will abide with them for ever. They are members of one family, fellow-citizens, and of the household of faith. They are members of one body, of which Christ is the head. They have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one hope of their calling. They have all fled from one city, that of sin and destruction; and they are all travelling unto one heavenly country. They are all clothed with one garment, the complete righteousness of their Surety and High Priest. They are all

the spouse of Christ, who is one. They are all brethren, children of the promise. Shall then such persons fall out by the way? Nay, shall they not dearly love one another? 'Be kindly affectionate one to another, (says the apostle), with brotherly love,' Rom. 12:10. 'Let brotherly love continue,' Heb. 13:1. Such love is a sure and infallible sign of your being the friends and followers of Christ. 'By this (says our Lord), shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love to one another.' Be at peace then among yourselves, and shew that ye are subjects of the Prince of peace, and heirs of the legacy of peace which he has left you.

THE PREFACE TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

EXOD. 20:2.—I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

SOME take these words, which are the first of that speech spoken immediately by God himself, to be a part of the first commandment, shewing who is the true God, that is to be our God. Our Catechism determines them to be a preface to all the commandments; and though they have a particular relation to the first command, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me,' viz. The Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; yet, seeing the first commandment has a common relation to all of them, and is interwoven with all the rest, and the words natively enforce obedience to the whole, they are set here as a preface to all the commands, like a magnificent entry into a palace, decorated with the arms of the owner. In the words consider,

1. The Speaker and Giver of these commandments. It is the Lord, particularly Jesus Christ, who gave this law in the name of the Trinity. This is plain from the scripture, Acts 7:38. Heb. 12:24–26. It

was he that brought the people out of Egypt, and that appeared in the bush that burned with fire, and yet was not consumed, giving commission to Moses for their deliverance, Exod. 3:2–8.

2. The speech itself, wherein we have a description of the true God, bearing three reasons for the keeping his commands. (1.) From his sovereignty; he is the Lord. (2.) From his covenant-relation to his people, thy God. (3.) From the great benefit of redemption, and deliverance wrought for them.

DOCT. 'The preface to the ten commandments teacheth us, That because God is the Lord, and our God, and Redeemer, therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments.'

But it may be asked, Why does the Lord make use of arguments to induce us to obedience? Ans. Because he loves to work on man, as a rational creature, according to the principles of his nature. Hence he says, Hos. 11:4. 'I drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love;' and because he delights in no obedience but what is unconstrained and cheerful. It is truly matter of wonder, that the infinitely glorious God should be at so great pains to incline man to pursue his own happiness.

Here I shall consider the several reasons of obedience mentioned in the text and doctrine, and then draw some inferences for application.

First, As for the first reason for obedience to these commandments, it is in these words, I am the Lord, or JEHOVAH; that is, an eternal, unchangeable one, having his being of himself, and from whom all being is derived; Exod. 3:14. I AM THAT I AM. This is a very significant name, and denotes, (1.) The unity of the Godhead, that he is one true God, having no partner, equal, or rival. (2.) The reality and certainty of his being. Idols are nothing; all their divinity is only in the fancies and opinions of men: but God is a real and true being. (3.) The necessity, eternity, and unchangeableness of his being. All other things which have a being were once without being; they had

no existence till he gave it them: and if he please, they shall be no more, but be reduced into their primitive nothing; and all their being was derived from, and wholly depends upon him. But he was from all eternity an independent and self-existent being. (4.) The constancy and perpetuity of his nature and will; I am that I am; i. e. I am the same that ever I was, and will be the same, without all mutability in my nature, will, and purposes. This name includes these four reasons for our obeying his commandments.

1. The infinite excellency and perfection of his nature, whereby he is the natural Lord of all his creatures, Jer. 10:7. He is infinitely above us, and so glorious in his supereminent perfections, that the view of them must natively cause us poor worms to fall down at his feet, and receive his commands; and makes our rebellions monstrous, more than if a glow-worm should contend with the sun in its meridian brightness.

2. He is Lord Creator to us, that gave us our being, and we are the workmanship of his hands, and are therefore to be at his disposal, as the pots are at that of the potter, Psal. 100:2, 3. Whatever we have, tongue, hands, soul, body, &c. all is from him; how can we then decline his government.

3. He is Lord Rector, supreme Governor and Lawgiver to us, whose will is our law, James 4:12. 'There is one Lawgiver.' This he is as Jehovah, the fountain of all being, which gives him an absolute and unlimited dominion over us. So that disobedience to his commands is the highest injustice we are capable of.

4. He is Lord Conservator of us, the Preserver of men, Rev. 4:11. Every moment we have a continued creation from him, without which we could no more subsist than the beams of the sun without the sun itself, but would immediately dwindle into nothing. Being then thus upheld wholly in our being by him, should we not wholly be for him?

Secondly, The second reason is from his covenant-relation to us, thy God, The word denotes a plurality; and so shews, that one God in three persons to be the true God, and that all the three are the covenanted God of his people, Isa. 54:5. 'Thy Makers is thine husband;' for the word is plural in the Hebrew. Here I shall shew,

1. What this covenant is.

2. How this covenant bindeth to the obedience of the commandments.

1. What covenant is this? It is the covenant whereby he was Israel's God before the giving of the law on Sinai; for this plainly relates to a former relation betwixt them, by virtue of which they were brought out of Egypt. This was then no other but the covenant with Abraham and his seed, Gen. 17:7 and 15:18 and by virtue of the covenant-promise to Abraham, it was, that they were delivered out of Egypt, Gen. 15:13, 14, &c. That was not the covenant of works, for it is still opposed to the law, Rom. 4 therefore it is the covenant of grace.

Under this covenant with Abraham all Israel according to the flesh were in an external manner, whereby God had a more special right over them than the rest of the world; and so is it with all who are within the visible church at this day. But Israel according to the Spirit, the elect of God, and believers, the spiritual seed of Abraham, were and are most properly under this covenant, and that in a saving manner. Rom. 4:11, 12, 13. So that this reason is not general to all the world, but peculiar to the church.

2. I shall shew how this covenant bindeth to obedience to the commandments. Not as if obedience to the commands were conditions of that covenant; that is the nature of the covenant of works. For mark, God tells them he is their God before ever he proposes one commandment to them; and for God to be the God of a people in the sense of the promise made to Abraham, includes the assurance of their complete salvation, Mat. 22:32. But,

1. The consent to the covenant binds to the obedience of all the commands. The covenant is, 'I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people,' Heb. 8:10. So consenting that God shall be our God, we take on us the yoke of all his commands, to be for him only, wholly, and for ever, 2 Cor. 8:5. Isa. 44:5.

2. The honour of the covenant. Thereby sinners are advanced into a near relation to God. They become his servants, whose honour it is to serve him; his friends, whose honour it is to advance his interest in the world; his spouse, whose honour it is to be for him, and obey him; his members, whose honour it is to serve himself of them.

3. The privileges of the covenant, Luke 1:74, 75. Such are regeneration, whereby a new nature is given, to be a principle of new life, 2 Cor. 5:17. Justification, whereby the curse is taken off the tree, that it may be no more barren. Sanctification, whereby they die unto sin, and live unto righteousness; even as the curing of the lame and palsied man obliges him to bestir himself.

4. The great end of the covenant, which is no other but to restore fallen man to his primitive integrity, and to bring him to a state of perfect assimilation to God, Cant. 3:9, 10. The holiness required in the ten commandments is the kingdom and the throne, from which the devil had expelled and pulled man down. This covenant is entered into for restoring him again to that kingdom, and so binds to endeavours that way.

Thirdly, The last reason is drawn from the redemption and deliverances wrought for his people. The history is well known, and some of the leading circumstances of it will be mentioned anon. Here I will shew,

1. Why this deliverance is commemorated here.

2. What reason for obedience there is in it.

1. I shall shew why this deliverance is commemorated here.

(1.) To shew the faithfulness of God to his promise and covenant with Abraham, Gen. 15:13–16. And so he shews himself to be Jehovah by ocular demonstration, Exod. 6:3.

(2.) The strangeness of that deliverance. When the Israelites were groaning under their taskmasters in Egypt, and had no prospect of relief, the Lord raises up Moses to be a deliverer unto them. He sent him in before Pharaoh, to work wonders in his sight. The Lord delivered his people with a mighty hand and outstretched arm. He sent plague after plague upon Pharaoh, till he sent Israel away, blasting the fruits of the earth, killing the beasts of the field, the fishes in the rivers, and all the first-born in the land of Egypt; and when Israel went out of Egypt, God made the waters of the sea to part, and become a wall unto them; they marched on dry ground in the midst of the sea; it was a safe passage to the Israelites, but a grave to the Egyptians, Pharaoh and his host being overthrown in the midst of the sea. Now, this was a strange and miraculous deliverance, a mercy never to be forgotten; and therefore it is commemorated here, to bind them to obedience.

(3.) Because it was the greatest and most memorable benefit. They were delivered from cruel tyranny. They were slaves to the Egyptians who made them to serve with rigour. They had cruel taskmasters Bet over them, who put them to hard labour. All their male children were appointed to be killed, or drowned in the river Nile, their affliction and bondage was so great that they were made to sigh and groan, and their cry went up to heaven. Hence Egypt is called 'the iron furnace,' Deut. 4:20; and here it is called the house of bondage. Again, they were delivered from Egypt, a place overwhelmed with pollutions and abominations. The Egyptians were gross idolaters, having 'changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to a corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things,' Rom. 1:23. They worshipped birds, and beasts, and creeping things; as the hawk, the ox, the crocodile; yea, they

worshipped onions and garlic. Now considering how prone the Jews were to idolatry, it was a great mercy to be delivered from an idolatrous land. This was a signal and memorable favour. Joshua reckons it among the chief and most memorable mercies of God to Abraham, that he brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees, where his ancestors served strange gods. And may not this deliverance from Egypt be justly reckoned among the choice mercies of God to Abraham's posterity.

(4.) It was a late and fresh instance of God's kindness to them. Which leaves an imputation of forgetfulness of old mercies on man's nature for which God stirs them up, by the newest and latest, to obedience.

(5.) Because it was a type of the spiritual deliverance by Jesus Christ from sin, Satan, and hell. [1.] It was typical of the deliverance from the bondage of sin. Now, of all servitudes sin is the worst; for it enslaves the soul. Before conversion, says Augustine, I was held, not with an iron chain, but with the obstinacy of my own will. In this slavery the soul is distorted and drawn asunder as it were by the powerful cravings of contrary lusts and passions. [2.] Of their deliverance from Satan. Thus all men by nature are in the house of bondage. They are enslaved to the devil, who is called the god of this world and is said to rule in the children of disobedience. Sinners are under his command, and he exerciseth an absolute jurisdiction over them. He blinds their minds with ignorance and error; rules in their memories, making them to remember that which is evil, and forget that which is good; in their wills, drawing them to the love and practice of sin, &c. [3.] Of their deliverance from hell. All men by nature are children of wrath, and liable to condemnation in hell for ever. Now the Lord Jesus, by price and power, delivers his elect from the state of bondage to sin and Satan, Heb. 2:15; and from the wrath that is to come, 1 Thess. 1:10. And this is done, not for all men, but only for the spiritual Israel of God, who were typified by the Israelites.

2. I shall shew what reason for obedience there is in this deliverance here commemorated. There is great reason.

(1.) Benefits received are most powerful engagements to duty, Rom. 2:4 and the greatest benefits are the strongest engagements. And no greater benefit are men capable of than that deliverance from the spiritual bondage which the godly Israelites had as well as the other, and which agrees to us New-Testament saints, Col. 1:13. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.

(2.) This deliverance is wrought for that end, and by that deliverance men are put in a capacity to serve the Lord, which otherwise they were not, Luke 1:74, 75. While they were in their hard bondage in Egypt, Pharaoh would not suffer them to go serve the Lord, but now they had nothing to hinder them from it. So when men are under the bondage of the covenant of works, they are withheld by the rigour thereof, from serving the Lord in an acceptable manner; but when once they are delivered by Christ from that rigorous bondage, they are made free men, and can serve the Lord in righteousness and holiness before him all the days of their life, having none to hinder them.

Fourthly, I shall conclude this subject with a few practical inferences.

Inf. 1. The ten commandments were not given to the Israelites as a covenant of works, but in the way of the covenant of grace, and under that covert. Ye saw it was Jesus the Mediator that spoke these, Heb. 12:24, 26.—Amongst all the reasons there is not one of terror; but the sweet savour of gospel-grace*.

2. The true way to attain to the obedience of these commandments, is first to believe that God is our God in Christ, and then to set about the performance of them; first to believe, then to do. The attempting it the contrary way, placing obedience first before faith, is entirely contrary to the Lord's method. Thus to believe, strengthens the soul for obedience.

3. All true obedience to the ten commandments now must run in the channel of the covenant of grace, being directed to God as our God in that covenant, Deut. 28:58. This is to fear that glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD. And so legal obedience is no obedience at all. This obedience is performed not for righteousness, but to testify our love to the Lord our Righteousness; not in our own strength, but in that of our Lord God and Redeemer; not to be accepted for its own worth, but for the sake of a Redeemer's merits; not out of fear of hell, or hope to purchase heaven, but out of love and gratitude to him who has delivered us from hell, and purchased heaven and everlasting happiness for us.

4. All men are obliged to keep these commandments, for God is Lord of all: but the saints especially; for besides being their Lord, he is their God and Redeemer too. So far is the state of the saints from being a state of sinful liberty, that there are none so strongly bound to obedience as they, and that by the strongest of all bonds, those of love and gratitude, arising from the amazing and wonderful obedience and satisfaction which he has performed for them. So that the love of Christ will sweetly and powerfully constrain them to run the way of his commandments; for his commandments are not grievous, and in the keeping of them is a great reward. They will love him, because he has first loved them; and his love has flowed out to them in the crimson streams of their dear Redeemer's blood, by which their sins are expiated, and their guilt atoned. And those to whom much is forgiven, will certainly love much.

5. Holiness is the most reasonable course that men can take, and the breaking over the bonds of religion is breaking over the bonds of reason. God might have required of us obedience by his mere will, without giving any other reason; and in that case, men had been bound to give it at their peril. But how much sweeter is the command, and agreeable what he demands, when he enforces the requirement he makes by such engaging motives, as that he is the Lord, a being possessed of all possible perfection, of every glorious attribute and excellency, the author of all other beings, and all the

amiable qualities and attracting excellencies of which they are possessed; that he is our God, related to us by a covenant, which he hath made with his own Son as our Surety and Saviour, and which is brought near to us in the gospel, that we may enter into the bond thereof, and the righteousness of which is brought near unto us, who are stout-hearted and far from righteousness, that we may accept thereof, and so be delivered from condemnation and wrath? How agreeable and ravishing is it to reflect, that he incites and prompts us to obedience, not by the authority of his absolute sovereignty over us, and undoubted propriety in us, but by the inviting and attracting consideration of the great deliverance he has wrought for us, of which the deliverance from the Egyptian bondage was a bright type! Can we reflect on the great salvation wrought for us by Jesus Christ, by which we were saved from all the horrors of sin and hell, rescued from the power of Satan, and delivered from the present evil world, and the pollutions thereof; can we reflect on these great and glorious benefits, which afford astonishment to men and angels, and our hearts not glow with the warmest fire of love and gratitude to him who hath done such excellent things for us? Can we hesitate a moment to say, good is thy will, O God, just and holy are thy laws, and we will cheerfully obey what thou commandest us?

Lastly, The more favours any have received from the Lord, the more they owe obedience to him. Repeated favours conferred, are new calls to gratitude and cheerful obedience to the will of God. Every mercy that we receive, every favour conferred upon us by God, is a fresh call to double our diligence, and to labour with our utmost might, to do the will of our gracious Benefactor and Friend. And a continued neglect of the favours and benefits which the Lord bestows on men, will make their sins the greater, and their punishment the sorer. O! that we may lay these things to heart, and fear the glorious and fearful name of the Lord our God!

OF THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

EXOD. 20:3.—Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

THE scope of this command is, to direct us to the right object of worship. In speaking to it, I shall follow the method of the Catechism. That is, I will shew,

I. What is required in the first commandment.

II. What is forbidden in it.

III. The import of the words, before me.

I. I am to shew, what is required in the first commandment.

The ground whereon this question is built, is, that every command hath an affirmative part and a negative. The negative is included in the affirmative, and the affirmative in the negative. As in this command, the negative is expressed, Thou shalt have no other gods before me; hence we infer the affirmative part, Thou shalt have me for thy God. Now, the commandment being exceeding broad, many are the duties included in this, the chief whereof are contained in the answer. 'The first commandment requireth us to know and acknowledge God to be the true God, and our God; and to worship and glorify him accordingly.'

Here are the three chief duties of this command. 1. Knowing. 2. Acknowledging. 3. Worshipping and glorifying. That these are required here, is evident: for it is impossible that we can have God for our God, if we do not know him; and seeing the command requires the obedience of the whole man, it necessarily binds us to acknowledge, worship, and glorify him accordingly.

FIRST, We must know God. Hence said David, 1 Chron. 28:9. 'And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father.' Knowledge is the foundation of all religion, for religion is a reasonable service. The mind of man should be clear and distinct in the uptaking of divine things. So it was when God made it, so it should be without darkness. This commandment requires us to know,

1. The existence of God, 'that he is,' Heb. 11:6, not only that there is a God, but that the God of Israel is the true God.

2. The nature of God, what he is. To know God comprehensively and adequately, is beyond the reach of the creature's capacity. Hence said Zophar, one of Job's friends, Job 11:7. 'Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?' and such a knowledge is not required. But a true knowledge of him we must have. Hence Christ said, John 17:3. 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God;' that is, to know him as he has revealed himself in his word and works. We must know him in the Unity of his essence, Deut. 6:4; and Trinity of persons, 1 John 5:7; in his attributes held out to us in the word, as that he is infinite, eternal, unchangeable, &c. in his works of creation, providence, and redemption.

And forasmuch as where the end is required, the means also leading thereto are required, so the diligent study and observation of the word and works of God, and all means leading thereto, are hereby required of us; such as praying, hearing sermons, catechising, &c.

SECONDLY, we are required hereby to acknowledge him to be the only true God, and our God; Deut. 26:17. 'Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God.' This acknowledgement presupposeth,

First, A believing firmly, and without the least hesitation, that God is, and what he is, as he has revealed himself in his word and works, Heb. 11:6; for that is the end of the knowledge of God, even a full persuasion of what is given us to know concerning him. And what he

reveals, it is certainly our duty firmly to believe; as that there is one God, this God a spirit; and that there are three persons in the Godhead, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

Secondly, A full and hearty chusing of this God for our God and portion, in opposition to all other persons and things: Psalm 16:2. 'O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord.' Psal. 119:57. 'Thou art my portion, O Lord.' We are not at liberty to chuse our God or our portion, what we will give our hearts to, love most, &c. God, as our great Lord and Master, has determined that for himself. And law vengeance will pursue the neglect of it.

Thirdly, Hence, seeing there is no right chusing of God as our God but in his covenant, it is evident, that covenanting with God personally is a great and plain duty of this commandment, Psal. 16:2, forecited. Is. 44:5. 'One shall say, I am the Lord's;—another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord.' I have before observed, that these commands are proposed under the covert of the covenant of grace, wherein God offers himself to all to whom the gospel comes to be their God in Christ; and this command binds us to accept. And under this duty several things are required of us.

1. A serious deliberation as to the matching of our souls; Josh. 24:15. 'Chuse ye this day whom ye will serve.' Think with yourselves, O sinners, young or old, who must have this heart of yours. Consider the match proposed to thee by God himself; think on the nature of the covenant, that thou mayest deliberately consent to it, Luke 14:28.

2. A breaking off the covenant with our lusts and idols, Matth. 5:24. God says, thou shalt have me for thy God; therefore thou must let these go their way. As one would rise up and say to a woman giving herself in marriage to another, I have a prior right to thee, thou shalt have no other husband but me. So that, could the voice of this command be heard, it would be heard saying and crying out of injury done to thy God, whensoever anything lawful or unlawful gets away the heart inordinately.

3. Faith in Jesus Christ, receiving him as he is offered in the gospel, and taking God for our God in him, even Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which is the accepting of the covenant, Matth. 22:4. For though the law knows not Christ, yet it obliges to believe whatever God shall reveal, and do whatever he commands. And 'this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ,' 1 John 3:23. So that the law confirms this great command in the gospel.

4. Faithfulness in the covenant, continuing with him, and cleaving to him; for this is an everlasting command, a negative binding at all times. He must be our God without interruption, without intermission. We must say with the Psalmist, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee,' Psal. 73:25.

Now, we must acknowledge God two ways; in our hearts, and in our words and actions.

1st, In our hearts, by entertaining a frame of spirit on all occasions suitable to what he has revealed of himself to us in his word and works, applying the same to ourselves; 'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths,' Prov. 3:6. Many that pretend to know God, acknowledge him no more than if they knew him not at all. Like the servant who does as he pleases before his master, never acknowledging him to suit himself to his will more than if he did not know he were his master.

We must thus acknowledge him in all his perfections, carrying ourselves in a suitableness to them. I will instance in a few.

(1.) We must acknowledge him as a spirit, from that consideration serving him in spirit and in truth, John 4:24; and doing all things with godly simplicity, 1 Cor. 1:12.

(2.) His unchangeableness must be so acknowledged, as to influence us to a firm trust in him, Psal. 89:34; to constancy and perseverance

in the way of God, and not to be given to change, Prov. 24:21. Yet as God repents him of the evil of punishment that he has spoken, so must we of the evil of sin that we have done, Joel 2:13.

(3.) His omnipresence must influence us to carry as ever under the eye of God wheresoever we are, Jer. 23:24 and so we own him as witness to our most secret actions.

(4.) His omniscience must influence us to all tenderness, as believing that he sees our thoughts, Mark 9:4 and even the most secret thing.

(5.) His omnipotence must influence us to fear him, Job 6:14 not to despise his chastening, nor to rise up against him, but to humble ourselves under his hand, and trust him in the lowest condition. And so of the rest of the perfections of God.

We must thus acknowledge him with respect to his word and his works.

[1.] To his word; as,

(1.) Hearing or reading the threatenings thereof against sin, we must acknowledge his justice and truth therein, by approving of them in our hearts, Isa. 39 ult. and trembling at his word, Isa. 66:2. Psal. 119:120. Otherwise we do not acknowledge the speaker as God.

(2.) Hearing or reading his promises, we must acknowledge him as merciful and true, trusting and believing they shall be all accomplished, and giving thereupon the more cheerful obedience to him, Gen. 32:9. For where God is acknowledged as the giver of the word, the arms of faith and hope will receive it.

[2.] With respect to his works.

(1.) The works of creation: at the view of these we must acknowledge him as the maker of all, infinitely powerful, wise, and good, by praising and magnifying his great name, Psal. 8 and 150:5.

(2.) Acknowledging him in the works of his providence; as when we meet with a cross providence, we must acknowledge him just, wise, and mighty, by humbling ourselves under his hand, and patient bearing of the stroke, because it is the hand of our God, Psal. 39:9. And when we meet with a mercy, we must acknowledge him to be merciful and gracious, and the giver of every good gift, by confessing ourselves unworthy of it, Gen. 32:10; and giving thanks for it to his name, 1 Thess. 5:18.

(3.) In the great work of redemption, as that wherein his justice, mercy, love, &c. are gloriously displayed, wondering at the glorious contrivance, heartily falling in with it, and laying our salvation on that bottom as firm and sure, becoming the divine perfections, Phil. 3:3.

2dly, We must acknowledge God externally, in our words and actions, Deut. 26:17 by a religious profession before the world of his being our God and of his truths and ways. Let none scorn a profession of religion; for it is a duty incumbent upon us by virtue of this command. God expressly requires it, 1 Pet. 3:15. 'Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.' It has a promise annexed to it, Rom. 10:9. 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, &c. thou shalt be saved.' The contrary is severely threatened, Mark 8:38. 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.' It is edifying to others, Phil. 1:12–14; and brings glory to God, Phil. 1:20. And the with-holding of it is an indignity done to God, as if religion were a shameful thing, Luke 9:26.

This profession is so necessary, that at no time we must deny the faith, the truth, and ways of God. Yet it is neither necessary nor fit every where to profess what we believe, Matth. 7:6; but in times of persecution we must especially maintain our profession, Heb. 10:23;

and when called of God, even to profess before the enemy on whatever hazard, Matth. 10:18.

THIRDLY, This command requires us to worship and glorify God accordingly; that is, as God and our God, Rom. 1:21. Matth. 3:10. For if we take him for our God, we must worship and glorify him as such, Mal. 1:6.

The worship of God is twofold, internal and external. It is the internal that is here required; the external is but the means of worship commanded in the second commandment. The internal is the main thing; in this chiefly true piety consists, and this is that wherein the life of religion lies. Now, that I may the more plainly lay before you the parts of this internal worship, I shall take them up under these. 1. The duty of our understanding. 2. Of our will. 3. Our affections. 4. Our conscience. 5. Our memory. 6. Lastly, The whole soul in all its faculties. And by these you will see what it is to worship God in spirit, and to be godly indeed.

First, For our minds and understandings, God must be worshipped there. Our minds must not be as dark groves for idolatry or creature-worship, but as lightsome temples for the worship of the true God. Passing what was said of the knowledge of God, we must worship and glorify him internally in our minds,

1. By thinking on him, Mal. 3:16. That is a black character, Psal. 10:4, 'God is not in all his thoughts.' That is our God we love most; what we love most gets most of our thoughts; if we take him, then, for our God, our thoughts must run most towards him. He has distinguished us from brutes by a faculty of thinking, and therefore should our thoughts be most of him, as the most worthy object.

2. By meditating on him, Psal. 63:6. Fleeting thoughts are not enough; he must be the subject of our fixed meditations. The duty of meditating on God and divine things is a necessary duty, pleasant, profitable, practised by the saints of best note, though the corrupt

heart has a peculiar unfitness for it. Live no more in the neglect of this duty: enure yourselves to occasional meditation at any time, and to more solemn and fixed meditation especially in the morning and evening. The Lord's day in a special manner is designed for this duty. And as in external worship it would be a notable defect to go about other parts of it, and neglect the solemn duties of that day, so in internal worship to go about other duties, and neglect the duty of meditation.

3. By highly esteeming him, entertaining high and honourable thoughts of him, prising him above all, and in our judgment preferring him to all persons and things, Exod. 15:11. Psal. 73:25. We are naturally blind to spiritual things; hence arises mean and low thoughts of God. We must shake off these, and labour to screw up our esteem of him, fearing no excess. Whatever is worthy of esteem in the creature, is but as a drop of the ocean of that which is in him.

4. By believing him, Exod. 14 ult. firmly assenting to the truths of his word upon his testimony, and so to give him the glory of his truth. He is a God that cannot lie; it is contrary to his nature to deceive; for he is truth; and so the least hesitation about his word is a high dishonour to him. This is a fundamental piece of internal worship; which failing, shakes the very foundation of practical godliness.

Secondly, For our will, as it is the leading faculty in all, so it must be in the internal worship of God. In our will he must have internal worship.

1. By chusing him as our God and portion, Josh. 24:15, 22 of which I spoke before. But this is not to be one single act, but frequently repeated, Psal. 16:2 and 73:25 especially when any person or thing comes in competition with him. The old choice of the saint will still be his new choice, whatever objects present themselves. It is a duty and a pleasure thus to renew our choice of God and Christ. 'To whom coming as to a living stone; they have come already, but they must be coming still; they have chosen already, but they must chuse him still;

especially while so many pretenders to our hearts are about our hands.'

2. By making him our chief and ultimate end, 1 Cor. 10:31. As all the good we have is of him, so it should be to him. His glory and honour must be the chief end of our natural, civil, and religious actions, in which they ought all to meet as the lines in the centre. Whatever view we have to ourselves in living and acting, we must have a view beyond that to God himself. We have not God for our God, if he be not the great end and scope of our life, Rom. 14:8.

3. By self-denial, Matt. 16:24. Self-denial pulls down self from the throne of the heart, that God may have that room which self has usurped, entirely possessed in an unregenerate state, and is still seeking for even in a state of grace. We must no more make ourselves our chief end; God must be master, and self must lacquey at his foot; and what concerns ourselves may be cut and carved as may best serve his honour. We must deny,

1st, Our civil self, all our outward comforts and enjoyments, so as to be ready to part with them, sitting loose to them at all times, and actually to forego them, when we cannot keep them and keep the way of duty to God too, Luke 14:26.

2dly, Our natural self, even our own life, Luke 14:26. If God be our God, neither death nor life must separate us from him. We must let life itself go, rather than that our God should go. All the Lord's people are not martyrs in action, but all are martyrs in resolution.

3dly, Our religious self, Luke 17:10. Whatever we do or suffer for God, we must beware we put it not in Christ's room, for he will endure no rival. We must renounce our confidence in all, as if we had done nothing.

4. By humility of heart, Mic. 6:8 whereby, from a sense of our own weakness and unworthiness, we lay ourselves low before the Lord, and give him the glory of all. This humility towards God implies,

1st, The keeping up a sense of our weakness and imperfection, Isa. 40:6. 2 Cor. 3:5. The humble man will acknowledge that his springs are without himself in God, and that he of himself is but dry and barren, unfit for any good thing, unable for any good work.

2dly, The ascribing the praise of all the good we are, have, or can do, to God, and denying it to ourselves, 1 Cor. 15:8, 9, 10. The humble see themselves decked with borrowed feathers, and therefore acknowledge their debt and holding all of free grace.

3dly, Self-loathing because of sin, the sin of our nature, and daily failings, Ezek. 36:31. As the peacock hangs down his starry feathers while he looks at his black feet, so will the sin that besets the man make him walk humbly with his God.

4thly, Keeping within the bounds of our calling, and meddling with nothing beyond our sphere, Psal. 131:1. If God be our God, he is our great Commander, who has allotted to all their several posts, without which they are not to stir but at his call. And humility will teach a man to keep within the bounds of his station, both because of the authority that set him there, and the sense he has of his having more to do within these bounds than he can well manage.

Lastly, A voluntary undertaking of any thing the Lord calls us to, however mean it may be in the eyes of the world. Such was David's dancing before the ark, his chusing to be a door-keeper in the house of God, rather than dwell in the tents of wickedness, Christ's washing his disciples' feet, &c.

5. By an entire resignation of ourselves to the will of the Lord, Acts 9:6. The renouncing of our own will is a chief piece of internal worship. Our will is the great rebel against the will of God; it must be bound hand and foot, and resigned. We must be resigned, (1.) To the commanding will of God, that his will must be a sufficient reason of obedience to us, Rom. 6:17; so that whithersoever the command draws, we must follow, though over the belly of our natural

inclinations, Gen. 22. (2.) To the providential will of God. We must lay our all at his feet, to be disposed of according to his pleasure, Luke 14:26; and as the shadow follows the body, so should our will follow the will of God, Psal. 47:4. If it be his will to lift us up, or cast us down, it must be ours too. And the more we lie like a ball at the foot of Providence, the nearer we are to our duty, Phil. 4:11, 12.

This resignation must be universal, extending to all things absolute, not suspended on any condition, but in every case; cheerful, so as we may say, good is the will of the Lord.

Lastly, By patience under crosses and afflictions, whereby a man walks tamely and peaceably under the heaviest yoke the Lord lays on him, Psal. 39:9. And why should we not? He is our God, and does us no wrong; we are ever punished less than our iniquities deserve, Lam. 3:23. God is wise enough, and knows to guide the world without us. He knows better what is good for us than we do. We have Christ for our example; and if we take God for our God, we must allow his sovereignty.

Thirdly, Here is required the inward worship of our affections, which are to be devoted to God, and wherein he is to have the chief room. The parts of it are these:

1. Love to God, whereby we love him as the chief good, the best of beings, Deut. 6:5. This holy fire should never be wanting on the altar of our hearts, glowing and flaming. We should love him for himself, his most glorious perfections, and for his goodness to us. We must begin at the last and rise to the first. This is the comprehensive, natural, never-failing duty.

2. Desires after him, Psal. 73:25. These are the breathings of a soul touched with the love of God, which tends always to perfect enjoyment; the silent messengers that should be travelling day and night from the bottom of the heart to heaven, Isa. 26:9. We have many wants: to what door should we go for supply but to his, for

communion with him here, and full communion hereafter? Phil. 1:23. And this love and desire must be above all other loves and desires.

3. Delight in him above all persons and things, Psal. 37:4 whereby we take pleasure in God whom we love. A life without any delight, is both a miserable and sinful life. A life that knows nothing but carnal delights, is brutish. If there be nothing in the world to yield delight to us, is there not a God in heaven to give it? If earthly things delight us, should not God himself be our delight much more? Should not these streams of delight in the creature lead us up to the fountain-head in God.

4. Rejoicing in him above all, Phil. 4:4. This is delight raised to a high pitch. We should cheer our hearts in God, in his glorious attributes, words, works, &c. Here only we can joy without hazard of overjoying. He is suited to our case, the field in which being purchased, yea, but discovered, we may for joy sell all that we have; and if he be not suited to our mind, our mind is in a bad case.

5. Sorrowing most for offending him, Zech. 12:10. To offend such a good, kind Father, should of all kinds go nearest our hearts, No trouble in the world, no crosses, should create that degree of grief, that sin should; for there is not so great an evil in the greatest sufferings as in the least sin; neither is the offence of any mortal to be laid in the balance with the offence of a good and gracious God. Though our hearts will spring with the touch of a cross, that will be like a rock in respect of sin.

6. Zeal for his honour, and against sin above all, Rev. 3:19. Zeal is a fervour of the affections for God, as one we have an interest in, and is a mixture of love and indignation which strongly carry the soul before them, Psal. 69:9. It is an eager concern in the heart, that there be no rival to God within the soul, or without in the world; whereby every piece of dishonour done to God touches a man's heart with that concern which the dishonour of a husband would touch the heart of a

wife. It spreads itself to whatever is the Lord's, his people, word, ordinances, works, &c.

7. Fearing him above all, Isa. 8:13. We must keep up such an awful sense of his majesty, greatness, and goodness, as may awe our hearts from meddling with what will be offensive, and may stir us up to please him in all things. The want of this, as it is a great contempt of that sovereign Being, so it is the opening of the sluice of sin and wickedness, Psal. 36:1. Fear of God is twofold; filial and servile. Filial fear is accompanied with love to God, Hos. 3 ult. and makes a man fear sin, not only because of the punishment, but because of the indignity and baseness of the action. Servile fear is only fear of wrath, without any mixture of love. This is sinful, not because men fear wrath, for that is duty, Matt. 10:28. Psal. 119:120 but because there is no regard in it to the goodness of God, nor is it mixed with love to him.

8. Hoping in him above all, Psal. 130:7. This hope is a certain expectation of those good things which faith lays hold on, grounded on the word, Psal. 119:49. The more good, powerful, and true any one is, the more may be our hope in the same; but there is none so good, powerful, and true as God, in comparison of whom the creatures are but a compound of evil and weakness, and therefore a lie. Where should our hopes be placed, then, but in him? How weak are the pillars they lean on, when created pillars? The soul sinking from hope when looking to the Lord, is sin as well as misery.

Lastly, Trust and confidence in him above all, Isa. 26:4. This is the soul's quiet resting in God in the midst of all tossings from the devil, the world, and the flesh. It is the soul's staying itself on the Lord for through-bearing, holding by his word. Other things might have been mentioned, as gratitude for mercies, &c.

Fourthly, As to the duty of the conscience, which makes a part of the internal worship of God, we may take it up in these following particulars.

1. Subjecting itself to God, and to God alone. Conscience is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly, Prov. 20:27, and to be carried by his hand whithersoever he will. It is his deputy in the soul, and must be subject to him, so as to be given up entirely to him, not to any other, Matth. 23:9 for that is to make a god of the creature. And therefore there is no sin where no law of God is broken: and for conscience to say otherwise, is to betray its trust, and to make an idol of that creature to which it subjects itself.

2. To receive its law from the mouth of God, to be rightly and fully informed of the mind of God with respect to man's duty, as it is revealed in his word and works. The defect of this makes the eye of conscience so far an evil eye, Matth. 6:23. It will not excuse that we sin with an erring conscience, Isa. 5:20 for that error of the conscience is a sin, and one sin will not excuse another. If conscience speak not according to the law and testimony, it is because there is no light in it, Isa. 8:20.

Lastly, To accuse or excuse according to that law, Rom. 2:15 and that exactly and vigorously. Conscience must not be idle, but at its work, giving a verdict, and a right one, upon our actions. It must not pervert the law, and approve what God condemns, nor condemn what God approves; nor go bluntly about its work.

Fifthly, The duty of the memory is to remember God, Psal. 63:6 and keep off from forgetting him, Jude 17. We must remember his word, John 2:17 bringing it out of the storehouse of the heart, where it was laid up, for our direction, instruction, comfort, &c. We must remember his works, Job 36:24. We should be often calling to mind what he has done in his works of creation, his providence towards ourselves, the church and others; and especially the great work of redemption, whereof the sacrament of the supper is a solemn memorial.

Lastly, The duty of our whole soul is, that all the faculties thereof be employed in their several operations towards him, so as the whole

soul may be as a parcel of candles in one room, each lighted and flaming. Particularly.

1. Prayer and calling on his name, Phil. 4:6. Prayer is the special duty of the soul, wherein the soul addresses God for all that it stands in need of. And here I mean especially mental prayer, which is always necessary to be joined with vocal; that is, the heart's going along with the words. It is sometimes necessary to be without words, as where we cannot speak but we are overheard, Exod. 14:15. There is also ejaculatory prayer, Neh. 2:4 which may be profitably used amidst our daily employments.

2. Internal praise and thanksgiving, Psal. 45:1. The altar of our heart should never be without thank-offerings, because we are ever in God's debt; and our good things received while here are more than our evil things, though the latter are deserved, the former not.

Lastly, Giving all obedience to him with the whole soul, Jer. 7:23. Our soul must be at his beck in every thing, and in every case.

Now, consider that these duties are here required of us in their perfection. None of them must thrust out another, but each of them appear in its proper place. We are obliged thereby to use all means leading thereto, and abstain from every thing that may hinder the same, both in ourselves and others.

USE 1. The commandment is exceeding broad, Psal. 119:96. They but deceive themselves that stick in the letter of it, and take it not up in its spirituality and extent. They falsify the measure, and no wonder they deceive themselves, when they measure themselves by it, Rom. 7:9. Were many of us put to the trial on this command, we would plead not guilty, because not gross idolaters. But, alas! if we viewed this command in its spirituality and extent, we would be forced to plead guilty, in respect of our not knowing and acknowledging God to be the only true God, and our God, and not worshipping and glorifying him accordingly.

2. Let these things serve to convince us of our sin, and deeply to humble us, Psal. 19:12. This preaching of the commands is a glass held before your face, wherein you may see your spots. O look unto it, that ye may see what are your sins! And when ye go home, go over these things in your meditation.

3. Learn from hence the impossibility of salvation by the way of the law, or keeping the commandments. Ye have heard yet but a part of the explication of one of these commands; but durst ye venture your salvation on the fulfilling of this one part of this one? How then can ye think to be capable enough for them all?

4. See the infinite obligations we lie under to Christ, for that he was made under the law, exactly fulfilled it in every point, and offers us his righteousness, whereby we may answer all the demands of the law in point of justification.

5. See the absolute need ye have of Christ. Look rightly on these commands as your creditors, behold the articles they charge on you as a just debt, and ye will see you must have a cautioner. Ye need Christ,

(1.) For justification and pardon, to remove the guilt ye have contracted. There is need of blood to wash away that guilt.

(2.) For sanctification. Here is the rule of your life. To each of these duties, and other duties, ye must set yourselves. Have ye not need of his spirit to strengthen, incline, and make you persevere therein?

II. I come now to the negative part of this command. 'The first command forbiddeth the denying, or not worshipping and glorifying the true God, as God, and our God; and the giving that worship and glory to any other which is due to him alone.'

There are three sins chiefly forbidden in this commandment. 1. Atheism. 2. Profaneness. 3. Idolatry.

FIRST, Atheism is here forbidden. It is the denying of God, a sin that overturns all religion by the root, Prov. 30:6. It is twofold; speculative in the judgment, and practical in the conversation.

First, There is a speculative atheism, which has its seat in the corrupt mind of man. It is also twofold; one striking simply at the being of a God, another at the being only of the true God manifested to us in his word. Both these are forbidden here; for the command says two things: 1. Thou shalt have a God. 2. Thou shalt have me for thy God.

1. Then there is an absolute speculative atheism, when men's hearts are so filled by Satan, that they do not believe there is a God at all, Psal. 14:1. I do not think that any person can arrive at a constant, habitual, uninterrupted atheism of this sort, more than they can destroy the being of their own souls, God has so interwoven the notion of his being with the very make of the soul. But such a conclusion they may come to lay down, and labour habitually to maintain it against themselves and others. This is consummate atheism.

There is also an initial atheism; that is, doubting of the being of a God, the mind going from one side to another, doubting whether there be a God or not. This arises from man's natural corruption, and is often carried on by Satanical injections. We have all atheistical thoughts. They may be found both in godly and wicked men. But in the godly especially, as they arise from Satan, they will be found exceeding heavy and tormenting. Men may reason against them, but the best cure is prayer, with God's manifesting himself to the soul.

Atheism, less or more, is a dreadful sin. 1. It is of a most malignant nature, striking at the very being of God, and so plucking up all religious worship and service to God by the roots: 'For he that cometh unto God, must believe that he is,' Heb. 11:6. 2. It is most contrary to the light of nature, and does violence even to a natural conscience. It is a flying in the face of nature and revelation at once. 3. It is destructive to human society: for take away the notion of a

God from amongst men, there would be no living more than among wild beasts. Lastly, It is a sin whereof devils are not guilty? for, however they foster it among men, they yet believe and tremble, James 2:19. But if nothing else do, death and hell, where there are no athiests nor atheistical thoughts, will cure the disease.

2. There is a comparative speculative atheism, when men, though they deny not the being of a God, yet do not believe the true God, as he is manifested in the scriptures.—So they have not him for their God, and therefore are athiests in scripture style, Eph. 2:12. Such are Heathens, Jews, Turks, Deists, Socinians, and others, who do not believe one God in three persons, denying any of the three, 1 John 2:23. Such receive an idol of their own fancy, but deny the true God. This is condemned here, and so is all doubting leading thereunto. And the least hankering that makes men come short of a full persuasion of what God is, as he is revealed in his word and works, is a sin here prohibited.

There are two things which ye should take heed of as tending to atheism. 1. The influence of prosperity on a corrupt heart, which is like that of the sun on a dunghill, Prov. 30:9 and therefore often is that added to threatenings, 'They shall know that I am the Lord.' This should make afflictions welcome as antidotes against atheism. 2. Doubting or denying of providence, Mal. 3:14, 15. Psal. 73:13, If men once get God excluded from the earth, it is a great step to the excluding him out of heaven too.

3. There is practical atheism, which is a denying of God in our works, Tit. 1:16. These have a language for or against God which he understands, yea, even men too sometimes, Psal. 36:1. It matters not what principles men have, when their practice is nothing but a contradiction to them, when the web of principles in their head is every day opened out by their conversation. This practical atheism is opposite to that acknowledgment of God as the true God spoken of before. Accordingly it is twofold.

1st. Practical heart-atheism, which is, when men entertain no frame of spirit suitable to what God has revealed of himself in his word and works, Psal. 14:1, 2, 3. And may not that be a confounding question to us on that point, Mal. 1:6. 'If I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts.' God is light, which discovers itself where-ever it is; but if we look into our hearts, we will quickly find oft-times that he is not there, by an absolute unsuitableness in them to his presence; that they are in no other case than if indeed there were no God; so that if *de non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio*, how oft and justly are we chargeable as atheists?

To instance in a few things. God is a spirit but how do we put him off with mere bodily service, as if we were serving an idol? Isa. 29:13. God is omnipresent; but though we should act as before him every where yet it is scarcely done any where. How often does our heart find a great deal of sinful liberty in one place which it has not in another; and to do that fearlessly in secret, which men would be ashamed to do before a child? He is omniscient; yet what a deal of security do men seem to have from secrecy, while the thoughts of God abide within their own breast, as if he no more saw our thoughts than men do? He is omnipotent; but how soon are we at giving up all for lost in difficulties to us inextricable? and how little awe is there of God on our spirits, when we are in ways wherein his power is engaged against us? What is all this but heart-atheism originally?

If we consider how we handle his word, heard, or read, his promises, threatenings, commands, and how little our hearts are influenced thereby, suitably to what is read or heard, much heart-atheism will appear; so that when we are closing the Bible, or going out of the church-door, the language of our hearts in effect would often be found, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil, for practically they seem to be but idle tales.

If we consider how little God's works influence us, much heart-atheism will appear. I am sure, that men's hearts often, when they

behold the works of creation, could do no less than they do, if the world had been made by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, that is, to pass them unregarded. And for his providence under crosses, how often are men like the dog that snarls at the stone, but looks not after the hand that threw it? and in mercies as the fed horse, that greedily falls to the hay, but regards not him that laid it before him, but to kick at him? And as to the work of redemption, it is not seen, believed, or laid stress upon, by the most part of the world; and those that do, how often do they lay their weight on it but at a venture, as afraid it would break with it?

2dly, Practical life-atheism, which is when men carry before the world as if there were no God, Psal. 36:1.—Such are,

(1.) The factors for atheism in the world, who, by their devilish reasonings, mockings, and cavils at religion, do what they can to banish the notion of a God out of the world.

(2.) Those who, as they have no religion, make as little profession of it. God indeed is not their God, and as little do they avouch him to be so. They are none of God's servants, and they will not wear his livery.

(3.) Those who, whatever they profess, yet live as if there were no God, no heaven, no hell, but the Bible were a fable. There is a spice of this life-atheism in all the irregularities and disorders of our lives wherein our actions do contradict our principles of God.

(4.) Lastly, Those who having had a profession, do at length quit it. Their leaf faileth and falleth. [1.] There are some whose leaf fadeth, as the leaf of a tree in harvest, through want of sap from the stock, and so falls of. There are not a few at this day of that sort, who sometimes were blooming professors, but now they have lost leaf as well as fruit; and nothing ailed them to loose it, but just that the root of the matter was never in them. They have drawn back, and have not staid till they had been driven back. [2.] There are some whose leaf falleth, like the leaf of a tree in summer, by a stormy wind of

persecution. They would keep their leaf if it would always abide calm; but they cannot abide the shock of persecution, and so, rather than deny themselves, they will deny Christ before men, Mark 8 ult. and many such our times are likely to produce, because we have no other gods before the Lord.

Go home then, and mourn over the sin that some of us have never been troubled about hitherto; that is, atheism, which is not so rare in the world as is imagined. Thy heart is too kindly a soil for the worst of abominations, to miss any devilish corruption therein, that is going on in the world. And apply to Christ for his blood and Spirit, to remove the guilt of this sin, and destroy its power and influence in you.

SECONDLY, Another sin forbidden in this commandment, is profaneness, which is the not worshipping and glorifying the true God, as God, and our God, and much more the acting against his honour, quite contrary to those duties of worship and honour that we owe him. It will then be necessary that we look back to those duties of worship, which we mentioned to be those of the mind, will, affections, conscience, memory, and the whole soul, with all its faculties, that we may see what is forbidden, under this head.

First, There is a profaneness of the mind, Tit. 2:15; when the minds of men are like a dark grove for idols, confusion, and profaneness, instead of being a lightsome temple to God, where the candle of heavenly light is put out, and darkness from hell takes place instead of it. Consider, then, this profaneness of mind.

1. In opposition to the knowledge of God; and so this command forbids,

1st, Ignorance of God and divine things, especially such as are fundamental, Hos. 4:1, 6. There is a natural ignorance, with which man is born, like a wild ass's colt, that must needs be cured, for it is the sad effect of the loss of original righteousness. There is an

effected ignorance among them that have the means yet, through enmity against God and his law, will not learn, or through laziness and carelessness will not be at the pains, Job. 21:14.

Ignorance is a mother-sin, as blindness disposes men to fall over every block in their way; therefore the scripture tells us it is a special destroyer, Hos. 4:6; and has a most terrible threatening annexed to it, Isa. 27:11; 'It is a people of no understanding: therefore, he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.' If it is so terrible in those that want the means, how will it be to others? 2 Thess. 1:8.

But though we be not chargeable with that gross ignorance, we do not satisfy that command, Prov. 30:2. How many things are revealed that we ought to know, which we know not? How imperfect and nuclear is the knowledge we have of many things? but from the beginning it was not so. And how ineffectual is our knowledge! and what little influence has it on our practice!

2dly, Misapprehensions of God, Acts 17:28, 29. O how liable are we to these, to apprehend God to be what he is not! When we begin to apprehend him, the first way the heart goes is to misapprehend him. The world is full of this. Seldom is it that the heart does not blot out some of his attributes, misapprehending his word and works. And such are all false opinions concerning him, Rom. 1:21.

2. In opposition to thinking and meditating on God, is forbidden,

1st, That profane carelessness of the heart, whereby God is not in all our thoughts, Psal. 10:4. He is our first principle, last end, witness, and judge, so that we should set him always before us, Psal. 16:8. But, instead of that, we forget our God, and then forget ourselves, though there is never a moment but we are receiving at his hand, Jer. 2:32.

2dly, The neglect of the great duty of meditation, spending no time on that work, yea, and a disposition of spirit averse to it, and that

cannot fix on it. Men's hearts can fix well enough to carnal meditations, that may advance their worldly interest, or gratify their lusts; but to meditations of God they are as unstable as water. They will sink and dive to the bottom in these muddy waters, while they will float like a feather in the waters of the sanctuary and it is as difficult to get the heart off the one as upon the other.

3dly, The resisting of the thoughts of God when they bear in themselves on the soul, Rom. 1:28. Sometimes the Lord makes heavenly thoughts dart into the heart for conviction, humiliation, &c. but like a stitch in the side, presently there is a hand laid on it to press it down. Thus men war against God, and will not think on him, till he himself stop them in their mad career.

3. In opposition to the honourable thoughts of God, required in this commandment is forbidden,

1st, The want of these honourable thoughts of him, the not esteeming, admiring, and adoring him above all. High thoughts will men have of trifles, that have none of the Highest. If we look to what he is, and consider our thoughts, we will be found most guilty in this point.

2dly, Mean and low thoughts of God and Christ These are so frequent in the world, that Christ is said to be despised, and not esteemed, Isa. 53:3; and God contemned by the wicked, Psal. 10:13. Read the thoughts of your heart on the work of your hands in respect of duty, Mal. 1:7, 8.

3dly, Unworthy and wicked thoughts of God, Psal. 50:21 which are heart-blasphemy not to be named. Sometimes these do arise from the corrupt heart by an ordinary influence of temptation, where the heart, like a raging sea, casts up its mire and dirt against heaven; and they follow on a loose and carnal frame, wherein mean thoughts of God have settled themselves; or from some galling of conscience from fear of wrath, while the heart is glued to the sin; or from

extremity of trouble, while the spirit is unsubdued. It is a dreadful sin, and has much of hell in it. But there are wicked thoughts, or blasphemous injections, that are immediately from the devil, that come in suddenly, like fiery darts, so as to make a man to shiver, and being continued will sicken the body, and torment the soul extremely. These are not our sins, unless by consenting to them we adopt them, Matt. 4:9.

4. In opposition to the great duty of believing God, several things are forbidden, some in defect, some in excess.

1st, There is, (1.) Doubting of or questioning the truth of whatsoever we know God has revealed. The queries of the false heart, concerning revealed truths, 'How can these things be?' are a great affront to the veracity of God.—(2.) Unbelief, which gives the lie to the Lord's word, whether doctrines, promises, or threatenings, 2 Kings 7:19. Deut. 29:19, 20. This is the great stumbling-block of the perishing world, and enemy of the saints.—(3.) Misbelief; that is, when men believe sin to be duty, and duty to be sin, Isa. 26:9;—(4.) Heresy, which is a pertinacious defending of any error against a substantial point of truth, Gal. 5:20.—(5.) Lastly, Lesser errors want not their own sinfulness, as being contrary to revealed truth, that we are obliged to know, and contrary to that believing of God required in his word. On the other hand,

[1.] Vain credulity, when people, through the instability of their minds, lightly embrace doctrines pretended to be from God, without narrowly examining and discovering the truth, 1 John 4:1. We must answer for what we believe, as well as for what we reject; and therefore the Bereans were commended for searching the scriptures, whether what the apostles taught was agreeable to them, [2.] Tempting God, Matth. 4:7 when people cast themselves out of God's way, and yet expect his protection; when out of the way of the command, they look for the benefit of the promise. There is another way of tempting God, and that in defect, when people will not believe, unless they see signs and wonders, and cannot take God's

bare word. [3.] Carnal security, Zeph. 1:12 when, over the belly of all the threatening of God, men promise themselves safety in an evil course.

Secondly, There is a profaneness of the will. It is a stony heart, enmity against God, having a propensity to evil in it, total in the unregenerate, partial in the regenerate. This command directs it to God. The profaneness of it lies in a departing from and opposition to God.

1. Whereas it is the duty of our will to take God for our God, and enter into his covenant, and to hold by him as our covenanted God, here are forbidden several sorts of profaneness. As,

1st, The total omission of personal covenanting with God, closing with and accepting of God as our God in his covenant. A Sad sign of an ungracious heart, Isa. 44:3, 5. Eph. 2:12. What a profane will must that be that will not come under the bond of the covenant? What way do men think that God can be their God if they take him not in his covenant? Ye that never closed with God in a personal covenant, have your religion yet to begin. Think on it, ye old neglecters, and ye young ones, that have never ratified with your own consent the covenant made for you in baptism.

2dly, The not renewing our covenant with God, and repeating our choice. Our frequent backslidings require it, Jer. 50:4. What hope can we have that so often go a-whoring from our Lord and Husband, if we do not return and renew the marriage-covenant? The neglect of this is a fatal mistake at this day, when judgment is at the door. O! what should we do in such a time, but humble ourselves for breach of covenant, and renew covenant with God, under the view of these evil days? If this were done, it would be a good preparation, and would make way for national renewing our covenant engagements.

3dly, Hypocritical covenanting, consenting in words to the covenant, but not taking God for our God with our hearts, Hos. 8:2, 3. They

that would take God for their God, must put away their strange gods, and open their hearts that the King of glory may come in. But, alas! many give him the hand, who give him not the heart. He is our God to whom our hearts are devoted. Though we give God the best of words, if our lusts get the best of our hearts, we are dealing hypocritically with God.

4thly, Dealing falsely in the covenant, Psal. 50:16, 17. O what matter of shame and confusion is there for us here? What children of Belial are we, whom national, baptismal, and personal covenants will not bind! How often after vows have we made enquiry, returned to those sins which we have renounced, and engaged against, eat in the best words that ever we spoke in making a covenant, and thrown away the happiest bonds that we ever came under!

5thly, Covenanting and engaging against God, his cause and way, and binding ourselves to sin; whether rashly in our private walk, by the vehemency of our passion, Eccl. 5:6; or more deliberately, in obedience to authority, Hos. 5:11. This has been, is at this day, and is still like to be more, the sin and snare of this land. But let us remember, that our covenant with God must regulate all other engagements we come under; and if once we take God to be our God, our hands are bound up from taking any other in his place. For 'we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth,' 2 Cor. 13:8.

Lastly, All compact with the devil. Such is the corruption of human nature, that men will take the devil for their god. Here is forbidden, (1.) All witchcraft, sorcery, malice, and devilry. These renouncing God, become the devil's vassals and servants in a special manner, to have communion with him here in mischief and wickedness, and communion with him in hell fire. Two things readily occasion it: either discontent with one's own condition, or desire of revenge, which ye should beware of. (2.) All using of spells and charms, whether for knowing of secret things past or to come, for curing or preventing of diseases in men or beasts, or for any other effect whatsoever. This is an implicit compact with the devil, which those

that are far from express covenanting with him may fall into. Both are condemned, Deut. 18:10, &c. There are, alas! many of these things which are unworthy to be maintained; but take this rule in this case, That whatsoever is brought to pass by means, which neither by the appointment of God, nor the nature of the mean used, can be expected, is from the devil. The sacraments and medicines are means of divine institution, and by the blessing of God, when used in faith, are conducive to the ends for which they are appointed. But the truth is, spells, charms, &c. are the devil's sacraments. For what virtue can there be in words, a key, riddle, laying such or such things above a door-head, &c. to produce the effects expected by miserable creatures from them? But they are Satan's sacraments, that must be used with a kind of truth or belief of the success, at which the devil produceth the desired effect sometimes, God permitting it: for he cannot always do it.

2. Whereas it is a duty of this command to make God our chief end, it forbids,

1st, Men-pleasing, Gal. 1:10. There is a holy man-pleasing which we should all learn, if we would please God, Rom. 15:2. 'Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.' Paul was dexterous at that holy art, 1 Cor. 9:19–22 turning himself into all colours, but black, to please them, for their good. But this sinful man-pleasing is, when we set ourselves to please men without regard to the pleasing of God, proposing their pleasure as our only or chief end, Tit. 2:9. Compare Eph. 6:6. Col. 3:22. And this we are guilty of, either when we do a sin to please men, or do a good thing, or lawful, more to please them than God.

2dly, Not making God our end at all, Psal. 86:14 when God's honour has no place at all in our projects and actions. Thus he who should have the chief place in all we do, has none; the chief corner-stone is not admitted into the unsanctified building, but self is the beginning, middle, and end. Many such black pieces without mixture are in the web of our conversation.

3dly, Not making God our chief end, when, though we have an eye to God in our actions, yet not the chief eye; not seeking him above all, in all, and beyond all, 1 Cor. 10:31. Psalm 73:25. Man's will at his creation was made chiefly looking to God; and the least deviation from this is our sin. But O how often is our respect to God inferior to what we have to ourselves! God is made the mean, and ourselves the great end. Many parts of the saints' religion, and all the religion of others, are rather a serving themselves of God than a serving of God.

3. Whereas self-denial is a duty of this command, it forbids,

1st, Self-seeking. Not that we may not at all seek ourselves, but we must not make ourselves our only and chief end, Phil. 2:21. That is sinful seeking, when our own things exclude Christ's things, or are above the things of Christ; when, neglecting God, we seek only our own profit or pleasure; or when in any thing we have no view beyond these to God. In natural, civil, or religious actions, men may seek their own profit and delight, Prov. 27:23. Eccl. 2:24 and 9:7, 8. Cant. 1:2. But these must be directed towards God, being sought, that thereby we may be in the better capacity to serve our God. They must be used as stage-coaches to help us on our way, not as beds to lie down in and rest there. But O what guilt is contracted in these matters! What self-seeking is chargeable on us,

(1.) As to natural actions, Zech. 7:6 having no higher end in these than ourselves, no respect to the command of God, but our own appetite; not to fit us for the duties of our general or particular callings, but to please ourselves.

(2.) In civil actions, Prov. 21:4; no eye to God's command, no eye to his honour; but to our own wealth and outward estate. This was the sin of the old world, Matth. 24:38. Luke 17:27, 28. But religion teaches to eat and drink, because God has said, 'Thou shalt not kill;' to marry, because he has said, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery;' to work, because he has said, 'Thou shalt not steal,' and that they may honour the Lord with their substance.

(3.) In religious actions, Prov. 15:8. How often is religion made to serve men's interest, and lacquey at the feet of carnal projects? What self-seeking is there in our religion, seeking worldly advantages, credit, and a great name, our own peace, and welfare for eternity at best, which is but self-seeking, if we see not that in God which makes us seek him for himself.

2dly. Self-love, 2 Tim. 3:2. Love ourselves we may, our souls, our bodies; but the love of God must regulate our love to ourselves, and we must love ourselves in God and for our God, not more than God, nor as much, Matth. 22:37, 38, 39. The love of God is the first command. Our neighbour must be loved with an inferior sort of love, not as our God, but as ourselves: therefore the love of ourselves must be inferior to that of God. Now, sinful self-love is that inordinate affection which we bear to ourselves, without due subordination to God, a love of ourselves that carries us off our duty to God. This prevails over us when we are not ready to sacrifice our all to God at his call, Luke 14:26. Hence proceeds defection from the truth in time of Trial, the gratifying of ourselves at any time at the expence of God's displeasure.

3dly, Self-pleasing, Rom. 15:1. It is a narrowness of spirit, whereby, if we can please ourselves, we value not the pleasing of others for their good, as if we had been only born for ourselves. It is a sin that is highly displeasing to God, and the bane of society, wherein men must retrench something from themselves to please others, otherwise they will be as briars and thorns continually in the sides of one another: for what can be expected there where each will needs have his own way of it? Upon this it is that the using or not using of indifferent things is built.

4thly, Self-confidence, whereby men lean to the broken reed of their own wisdom and their own strength, instead of leaning to God, Prov. 3:5 and 28:26. It carries men off from God, and brings down a curse on that in themselves which they lean unto; their parts, their pains, abilities, resolutions, &c. Jer. 17:5. There is much sin this way.

5thly, Self-conceit, Prov. 26:12. It is men's blindness and ignorance that makes them so. Were their eyes opened, they would see they were nothing. Self-jealousy becomes us better, who have so little to make any good of.

Lastly, Self-righteousness. This is the worst kind of selfishness, whereby men, puffed up with an opinion of their own works, put them in Christ's room, and look to procure the favour of God by them, Isa. 58:3. This is a subtile idol, venting itself many ways; as (1.) Reckoning more on the quantity than the quality of duties, Luke 18:11. (2.) More on the quality of duties, when they are done vigorously than on our interest in the blood of Christ. (3.) Expecting returns of favour or debt from the well-doing of our duty. And (4.) Fretting and rising of the heart against God under disappointments, &c.

4. Whereas humility of heart is required in this command, there is forbidden in it, pride of heart, with all the branches of that cursed tree. It is a setting up of a man's self instead of God; a swelling of the empty heart, that is most hateful to God, 1 Pet. 5:5 a sin that destruction naturally follows. It has many poisonous branches; for it turns itself into many shapes, all here forbidden; as,

1st, Counterfeit humility. Pride often goes abroad under the mask of humility, as the devil transforming himself into an angel of light. There was as much pride in the disfigured faces of the Pharisees, (Mat. 6:16.) as in the proud looks of others; in Diogenes, as in Plato. Men had need take heed they deceive not themselves; for pride of heart may put them upon, and make them please themselves in great external humiliations.

2dly. Insensibleness of our own weakness, sinfulness, and insufficiency, Hab. 2:4. There is little impression of that on our hearts for the most part; and when at any time it is made, how quickly does it go off? for our hearts are like a stiff stick, that will quickly lose the bend. This insensibleness vents itself in, (1.) A woful

self-sufficiency, whereby men are carried off from depending on God, and hanging continually about his hand, Jer. 2:31. (2.) A miserable security as to sin, especially sins of the grosser sort, to which we think we have no need to take heed. But if the pride of our hearts were fallen, we would fall in with the warning, 1 Cor. 10:12. 'Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.' (3.) Rigid censuring and rejecting those we judge have sinned. What is the cause of that, but the beam of pride and insensibleness of our own weakness in our own eye? Matth. 7:1, 2, 3. Therefore the apostle recommends lenity and meekness upon this consideration, Gal. 6:1.

3dly, Meddling with things without our sphere, Psal. 131:1, 2 thrusting ourselves on duties that are not the duties of our station. This proceeds from pride of heart, that waits not for God's call, but invades the province given of God to others. Uzziah smarted for this; as did also Uzzah.

Lastly, Refusing any duty we are called to for the meanness of it. It is the pride of heart that reckons any thing unbecoming us that God requires of us; yet in many cases our honour with us takes place of God's honour; and men not only do not their duty, but scorn to do it. God says, seek my face, be reconciled to me; but they scorn to do it. They may honour God by submitting to instruction, the discipline of Christ's house; but they scorn to do it as unbecoming them, 1 Sam. 2:30.

5. Whereas resignation to the will of God is our duty required in this commandment, here is forbidden.

1st, All even the least discontent with our lot, or any thing that God puts in it. If God be our God, he must chuse our inheritance for us, Psal. 47:4. It is a sad character to be complainers, viz. of their lot, Jude 16. that blame or are angry at their lot, Gr. A person has something in his state and condition that is not according to his mind and will, a husband a wife of a disagreeable temper, something they want which they would fain have, something they have that they

would fain be free of, and they fret themselves, because what God has made crooked they cannot make straight. It is straight enough to God's will, though not to thine, Job 34:33. The consequence of that discontent is, We will not have this man to reign over us. It is people's duty not to quarrel with their lot, and be always screwing up their lot to their mind, but to bring their will to their lot, because it is God's will.

2dly, An unsanctified contentment with their lot; and that is, when people carry easily under any hardship in their lot, but not upon the Christian principle of resignation to the will of God. There are many other ways to satisfy a discontented mind; business and company may put it out of their heads, taking that content in one creature-comfort which they cannot get in another, some in lawful, others in an unlawful way, consulting their own peace. But in the meantime the consideration of the will of God does not prevail with them to a contented resignation.

3dly, The bearing of any hardship in our lot as just, but no satisfaction with it as good, Isa. 39 ult. What he does, is not only well done, but best done. It reflects dishonour on God, only to think the work of his providence towards us to be tolerable. Surely we come so far short of our duty, as we do not with satisfaction acquiesce to the hardest piece of our lot, as best for us.

6. Lastly, Whereas patience is here commanded under crosses, here is forbidden,

1st, All impatience, grudging, murmuring, and quarrelling under the hand of God, Psal. 37:7, 8. This is a fire kindled by the devil, by striking a proud heart against firm providence, firm as mountains of brass. It is kindled in men's breasts by the heart's rising against the cross. It often sends out its hellish smoke in passionate expressions by the mouth, and scorches others by the sinful deeds it puts them on: for such are as madmen throwing about firebrands, arrows, and

death. It makes a man an enemy to himself; and flies up against God, accusing him of injustice, folly, and cruelty.

2dly, Insensibleness under the hand of God, Isa. 42:25 who stand unmoved under afflictions, as if they were stocks and stones, and cry not when he bindeth them. Thus men are several ways guilty. (1.) Sometimes they are brutish under afflictions, and will groan in their troubles like sick beasts, but nothing more. (2.) Stupid and indolent, without sense of trouble. If they be not the better, they are as little the worse of it. (3.) A Roman courage and briskness of spirit, that will not stoop under what they meet with. And, (4.) patience perforce; they bear the yoke, because they cannot get it off, and they will not worry in the band.

3dly, There is a profaneness of the affections, Rom. 1:25, 26. The affections or passions in themselves are neither good nor evil; but they should be consecrated to God chiefly and to their proper objects in God, and then they are good. But being denied to God, or set on improper objects, they are profaned; and if they be given to their proper objects as much and more than to God, that is idolatry; of which I am to speak afterwards.

1. Then, whereas it is commanded here to love God, there is forbidden,

1st, All want, yea and weakness, of love to God. It is a profaneness of heart to be coldrife in love to the most lovely object, this being especially the principal duty of holiness. 2dly, Love to those things we should hate. How often is our love mislaid thus? The corrupt heart fastens on those things that are like itself. 3dly, Hatred of God, and enmity against him, Rom, 1:30. This vents itself, (1.) In secret wishes there were no God, Psal. 14:1. (2.) That he were not such a God as he has revealed himself in his word, not just, holy, &c. (3.) In risings of the heart against his holy law, which is a transcript of his nature. 4thly, Hatred of his people that bear his image, for that they

are strict and holy in their lives. That is malignancy. Lastly, Hatred of his ordinances, work and interest, and of his kingdom in the world.

2. Whereas our desires should go out after God, here is forbidden.

1st, All want and weakness of desires after God, Psal. 10:4. How often are our hearts free of these, no breathings, no longings after the Lord? How weak and languishing, while desires after created things throng in one upon another? These can have no end, while the other have no beginning.

2dly, Desires after unlawful things which we should abhor. Though these desires be not accomplished, we must not wipe our mouths, and say, we have not sinned, Rom. 7:7. They are the breathings of the corrupt heart after sinful things, suitable to the corrupt nature.

3dly, Aversion to God and communion with him, Job 21:14. This is a backwardness in the heart to the duties of communion with God, when the heart, instead of ardent desires towards him, draws back, like a refractory heifer, that refuses the yoke. A sin which all have reason to be humbled for.

3. Whereas it is our duty to delight and rejoice in the Lord, this command forbids,

1st, The omission of that duty which God so peremptorily requires, Phil. 4:4. 'Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.' Think not little of this. What husband would take it well, if his wife had no delight in him? and with what confidence can we call God our God, if we know nothing of delighting and solacing ourselves in him? It is natural to us to delight in agreeable relations; and so it is to the new nature to delight in God.

2dly, Deadness in duties, going to them, and going on in them, without any spiritual relish, Rev. 3:1 even as we converse with those in whose company we have no pleasure. This is the plague of the generation, who, if they be not profane, are cold and formal. Our

services look not like that of the living God, but a dead idol. There is no need to make Abraham children of stones, for they are stones already.

3dly, Wearying in and of his service, Amos 8:5. Hence wandering in duties, for the heart is away; any thing is enough, and the only care is to get the duty over as a task, for there is no delight in God, or communion with him, Mal. 1:13.

Lastly, Carnal desires and joys. Not that all delight and joy in the creature is sinful; for God replenished the world, so as not to serve man's necessity only, but also his delight. But they are carnal and sinful, (1.) When they are on unlawful objects, and men go over the hedge of the law to seek what to delight themselves in. (2.) When they are excessive, though on lawful objects; which is, [1.] When people have no eye to God in them, as not taking them with thankfulness out of his hand, and to use them as what may fit them for the service of God in their general or particular callings; but exclude the thoughts of God out of them, either as the principle or end of them. [2.] When they so carry out the heart, as to unfit us for the service of God, and lessen our delight in the Lord; then is the handmaid taken into Sarah's bed. [3.] When men love them more than God, 2 Tim. 3:4.

4. Whereas it is our duty to sorrow for offending God, this command forbids,

1st, Hardness of heart and impenitency, Rom. 2:5. To move us to sin is easy, but to move us for it is difficult.—How can we pretend God is our God, if his honour be not dear to us; if the grieving of his Spirit be not grievous to us? But this is a main plague of the generation.

2dly, Hiding sin, which is most contrary to the nature of sorrow, Prov. 28:13. This is done, (1.) By denying guilt, Prov. 30:20. (2.) By extenuating it; whereas, if sorrow for it were deep enough, it would aggravate it, Luke 15:18, 19. (3.) By transferring the guilt on others,

as did Adam his sin on Eve. (4.) By palliating and excusing it, as did Saul in the affair of the expedition against the Amalekites.

Lastly, Thinking or speaking of our sins with pleasure, whereby they are re-acted, and the guilt doubled in the sight of God: and much more laughing at them, and making a mock or jest of them, Prov. 10:23 and 14:9. So they glory in their shame, and make a mock of affronting God.

5. Whereas zeal for God is here commanded, there is forbidden.

1st, Lukewarmness and indifferency in the matters of God, Rev. 3:16. Zeal is counted madness by the world; but no body wants zeal for something, but few have it for God. This holy fire is almost worn out in our day, because few have God for their God; and they that have, glorify him not as God. A chill cold has benumbed our spiritual senses. Since the Lord brought this church out of the fire, we have lost our fire-edge. We are fiery enough in our own matters, but very coldrife in God's matters. That coldness of affections, binds men down in the concerns of Christ's kingdom as managed in their own breasts, and then binds them down in these as managed in the world.

2dly, Corrupt, blind, and indiscreet zeal, Rom. 10:2 such as the disciples had in their Master's cause, when they were for commanding fire to come down from heaven to consume the Samaritans, for not receiving him, Luke 9:54. Zeal is such, (1.) When it proceeds merely from a hotness or keenness of the natural temper, so that men are hot in all things, in their own matters as well as God's. (2.) When it is not proportioned to the weight of matters, Matth. 23:23. (3.) When the heat strikes mostly outward against the sins of others, Matth. 7:4. (4.) When it carries men to that unto which they are not called of God. (5.) When it swallows up all pity to the offenders, 2 Cor. 12:21.

6. Whereas this command requires us to fear God, it forbids,

1st, All rashness and irreverence in the service of God, Psal. 89:7. His omnipresence should strike an awe on us at all times; and his special presence should strike a special awe on us when we approach his presence in duties. But, O! how do we rush into it without fear, as the horse rusheth into the battle!

2dly, Unconcernedness of spirit at his threatening word and alarming dispensations, the general sin of the present time, Amos 3:8. Who trembles at his word, though by terrible things he is answering us? Who is preparing to meet him in the way of his judgments?

3dly, Presumptuous sinning in spite of all fair warning, both by the word and providences, Psal 36:1. How do men count the darts of the word and conscience as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of his spear! We are incorrigible under judgments, as if we would bid a defiance to heaven, and desire God to do his worst, Jer. 8:6.

4thly, Bold and curious searching into God's secrets, which he hath thought meet to keep hid from us. Such is consulting with the devil, or those that have the black art, as Saul did with the witch of Endor, consulting with dumbies, psalmisters, fortune-tellers, using any means whatsoever not appointed of God to know our fortune, as it is called, &c. Deut. 24 ult. These things are but the taking of the devil's key to open God's cabinet.

5thly, A superstitious fear, a fear where no fear is by God's appointment, of which they have most that have little of the fear of God. Such is that foolish fear that ariseth from vain dreams, observing of freets, such and such times as unlucky, reckoning such and such things uncanny without any ground from the word of God, or from solid reason.

Lastly, A slavish servile fear of God, arising from hard thoughts of God, and banishing the love of God out of the heart.

7. Whereas hope in God is required in this command, it forbids,

1st, Presumption, which is an unwarrantable hope in God, not according to his word, which overlooks his justice, holiness, and greatness, Deut. 29:19 and over the belly of these, promises mercy.

2dly, Despair, Gen. 4:13 when people give up with all hope, as if their sins and misery were above God's mercy, power and grace, and the efficacy of his Son's blood.

8. Lastly, Whereas trust and confidence in God is required in this command, it forbids,

1st, All distrust and diffidence, anxiety with respect to his providence, when people cannot fix their hearts for provision, protection, &c. in his way, on the promises, but distrust them.

2dly, All rashness and vain confidence, attempting any thing without a warrant from God, and promising themselves success therein, without acknowledging God in it. A sin very frequent in our day.

Fourthly, There is a profaneness of the conscience here forbidden, Tit. 1:15. And there is condemned here,

1. The making men lords of our faith and conscience, which is, in effect, to make them our God, 2 Cor. 1:24. Matth. 23:9. There used not to be wanting such as would model the consciences of all men to their humours, and will have their will taken for law; and they readily find those that walk willingly after the commandment, to whom the commandment of men is the great rule. When therefore a man embraces any thing for religion on the mere authority of men, he sets up another god before the Lord.

2. Blindness and misinformation of conscience, Isa. 5:20. This is a setting up of our consciences instead of God, whose deputy only it is, and whose office it is only to declare the mind of God. So that declaring and urging its own mistakes instead of God's commands, it rises against this command, and this is matter of humiliation: For who can understand his errors?' Psal. 19:12.

3. Inactiveness and unfaithfulness of the conscience, whereby it does not effectually check for sin, nor incite to duty. Thus God is rejected in so far as his work in the soul committed to the conscience is neglected. How many are there whose consciences give them all ease in their sinful courses, and that cannot speak but on the grossest faults? and how remiss and slack is it in all?

Fifthly, There is a profaneness of the memory here forbidden. For whereas it is a duty of this commandment to remember God, his word and works, that we may think on him, love, fear, and esteem him; so,

1. Forgetting God is forbidden here, Jer. 2:32. This is one of the great sources of all the wickedness in men's hearts and lives. We do not remember with whom we have to do; therefore we do what our corrupt inclinations lead us to. We forget his word, his commands, his threatenings, his promises; therefore we sin fearlessly and serve him faintly, as working for nought. We forget his works, therefore his mercies engage us not, nor his judgments frighten us. Our memories in spiritual things are like a sieve in the water, leaking vessels that quickly let all slip. It is not only our misery, but our sin, which we have to be humbled for.

2. Remembering what we should forget. O how tenaciously does it hold those things that should be forgotten! An injury done to us will be fresh and green in our minds, when all the love of God in sending Christ to be the Saviour of sinners, will be quite gone out of our heads. It will much sooner turn up old sins with delight, than old mercies with thankfulness.

Lastly, There is a profaneness of the whole soul, wherein all the faculties thereof cast in something of their corruption to provoke the eyes of the Lord's jealousy. And,

1. Whereas prayer is required here, particularly that of the heart, this command forbids,

1st, The total neglect of prayer, when people do not so much as make a fashion of it in secret or in their families. That God is our God, how shall it be known if we do not pray to him? They that take idols for their gods, pray to them; and with what face will prayerless persons pretend that the living God is theirs?

2dly, The neglect and unfrequency of ejaculatory prayer, 1 Thess. 5:17. O but the so great neglect of this speaks forth the unholiness of our hearts! Are we ever but needing something from heaven? are not new snares and temptations still coming in our way? why are we so unacquainted with this short way of communion with God? It needs no business, it needs no secret place.

3dly, Not praying in spirit, when we pray with our mouths; so that all our prayers are but outward worship, lip-labour, not heart-work, John 4:24. Thus we become guilty many ways. (1.) When all our prayers are but the exercise of a gift, not performed with faith, love, fear, &c. Such are all the prayers of hypocrites. (2.) When the heart goes not along with our words, but remains dead, stupid, and senseless in our addresses to God, as if we were speaking to a dead idol, or to a man who must judge by our words what we would have, because he sees not the heart. (3.) When the heart contradicts our words, as praying that God would take away sin, which we have no will to part with, that he would give us that grace which we have no desire after, or that he would keep us from the temptations which we are longing for. (4.) When the heart wanders in prayer, going after other things, when we are before the Lord.

4thly, Profane prayers to God for mischief to fall on ourselves or others; which are all the prayers that some use; and are more frequent with others than their solemn prayers.

2. Whereas internal praise and thankfulness is required here, there is forbidden,

1st, Unthankfulness, the crying sin of the generation, on which God has heaped so many mercies. Ah! how do we receive our mercies, as if they were debts! When we want, perhaps we will cry; but when we have got the mercy, we are like the nine lepers, who forgot to return to thank their healer. There is no grateful sense of the Lord's goodness on our spirits, and so there is none on our lives.

2dly, Ascribing any good we have or can do, to some other quarter than to God, the true fountain of all. (1.) To fortune and good luck. How often will men acknowledge their good luck, while they overlook a good God? (2.) To ourselves, Deut. 8:17. How ready are we to ascribe our success to our own wit, pains, or industry, like those who sacrificed to their own net, and burnt incense to their own drag? Hab. 1:16; (3.) Or to ascribe it to any other creature. The instruments of our success will be thanked, when God is overlooked.

Lastly, Whereas we are required to give to God the obedience of our whole souls, here is forbidden. 1. Slighting and despising God and his commandments, making no account of them, and the obedience due to them, Deut. 32:15. 2. Resisting and grieving his Spirit, stifling its motions, and refusing to hearken to its suggestions, Eph. 4:30.

THIRDLY, This command forbids idolatry, which is the giving that worship and glory to any other which is due to God alone. It is twofold, gross external idolatry, and subtle heart-idolatry.

First, As to gross idolatry, this command condemns,

1. The heathens, whose religion brought in a multiplicity of gods. For having lost the right knowledge of the true God, the notion of God was like a broken looking-glass, where every part represents a small face, though when entire it represents one only. The worship of the sun seems to be among the most ancient kinds of idolatry, together with the moon and stars, Job 31:26, 27. And great men deified after their death became objects of worship. Thus at length they came to have a multitude of gods and goddesses.

2. The Papists, whose religion is nothing but the great apostasy from Christianity, headed by Antichrist. They are guilty of gross idolatry.

1st, They worship the saints departed, especially the virgin Mary, in whose worship they are so profuse, that they may be called Marians rather than Christians. To the saints they pray, make vows, swear by them, consecrate altars and temples to them, and offer incense. All which are parts of religious worship due to God alone. And they profess they place their hopes and confidence in them, Matth. 4:10 contrary to God's express command, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.'

2dly, They worship angels, pray to them, to bestow good things on them, and to protect them from evil; and especially the guardian angel, which they allege is allotted to every one, expressly contrary to the authority of God, Rev. 22:8, 9.

3dly, They worship the bread in the sacrament; for as soon as the priest has consecrated it, he falls down on his knees and worships it; then he lifts it up above his head, that the people may see it; and then they worship it too.

4thly, They worship the cross, the tree itself on which they pretend Christ died, and the image of it. They bow their knees to it, and kiss it, pray to it, and consecrate temples and altars to it.

Lastly, They worship the relics of saints, not only their bodies, but what belonged to them while they lived, their bones, blood, flesh, teeth, hair, clothes, shoes, belts, &c. They place these things on the altar, carry them about in processions, give them to the people to touch or kiss, fall down and worship before them. And all this while they keep up the scriptures, which the apostles left, from the people. So that Popery is but heathenism in a new dress.

Secondly, As to subtle heart-idolatry, that is more extensive. Men commit this idolatry with the creatures, when their mind, will, and

affections are set on the creature, as much or more than on God. So covetousness is called idolatry. Now, we are guilty of this idolatry.

1. When we love any thing as much or more than God, Matth. 10:37. For that is our god that gets most of our hearts; and that must needs be our idol that gets more of our love than God gets. Thus often we are found idolizing ourselves, the world, our lawful comforts, and relations. O how disorderly does the pulse of our affections beat! How violent are they towards the creature, but how weak and languishing towards God! The fire of love to God is oft-times like a fire of straw, that makes a sudden blaze and then dies; when that of love to the creature is like a fire of juniper that burns long, and is not soon quenched. This excessive love to the creatures appears, (1.) In the high esteem of them above God, and the communications of his grace. (2.) In the great eagerness that is used in the pursuit of them, more than in seeking God and his favour. (3.) In the greater uneasiness in the want of them, than in that of the consolations of God.

2. When men desire any thing as much or more than God, Phil. 4:6. How extravagant are the desires of the heart! Many things are desired more than the one thing needful. Our desires after created things had need to have their wings clipped, while the wings of desire towards God are far from being grown. How readily would we be filled if we knocked as eagerly at God's door as at that of the creatures? Try then what it is that of all things thou desirest most; That is thy God.

3. When we delight and rejoice in any thing as much or more than God, Luke 10:20. For what is a man's choice, and most suitable to his heart, he will delight and rejoice most in it. O what idolatry will this discover! How often is it found, that men will delight and rejoice more in a good bargain than in the everlasting covenant; in husband, wife, and children, more than in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! in a good farm or store-room, than in the field of the gospel;

where the treasure is, there will the heart be also; in a good suit of clothes more than in the righteousness of a Mediator.

4. When we sorrow more, or as much, for any thing as the offending of God. That is a sorrow of the world, 2 Cor. 7:10 that discovers the idolizing of the creature. The offence of man is often more at heart than the offence of God; and people will be at more pains to gain reconciliation with them than with the Lord himself. A small cross or loss in the world will draw tears, when sin will not draw a sigh from us; and ordinarily our afflictions lie more heavy on us than our sins.

5. When we have as much or more zeal for any thing than for God and his honour. Thus self is idolized, men being far more sensibly touched by any thing that reflects on themselves than on God. How often do men unmoved behold God's name dishonoured, while, if ye but touch them in their reputation and honour, ye will find they are not drones in their own cause, though they are so in God's! So men idolize their own conceits, being, as the Pharisees, much more zealous for their own traditions than God's commandments, for their own opinions than moral duties.

6. When we fear any person or thing more than God, Prov. 29:25. The greatest fear being due to God, if we fear any person or thing more than him, we idolize it. Thus men make a god of man, yea, and of the devil. And the fear of the wrath of man will have far more influence than of the wrath of God. This, in a time of persecution, is a special snare.

7. When we have more or as much hope in any thing as in God. Yet alas! how often will the promises of men revive us, when all the promises of God cannot do it!

8. Lastly, When we have more or as much confidence and trust in any thing, as in God, Jer. 17:5. Thus, power, wealth, strength, gifts, and abilities, are idolized, and whatever men trust more to than to God.

If it be asked, Whether it consists with the state of grace to have our love and affection more on any creature than on God? Ans. 1. We must distinguish betwixt the inward disposition of the soul, the habit of love, desire, &c. and the acts thereof. The habit of love, desire, &c. towards God in a godly soul, is always more firmly rooted in his heart, than the habit of love to any creature, Eph. 3:18. But yet the acts of love and desire towards the creature may be more strong under temptation; but that is their sin. 2. The strength of our affections is to be distinguished from the commotion of them, which sometimes may be greater and more sensible in the affection that is less. For, as the greatest joy is not always expressed in laughter, so the greatest affection has not always the greatest sensible stirring with it. But if people be solidly minded, and willing to forsake all for Christ, and to displease any rather than him, though they be more sensibly moved in their affection to earthly things, their affections are not therefore more on them than him.

I shall now shut up all with the consideration of these words, before me. 'These words, before me, in the first commandment, teach us, that God, who seeth all things, taketh special notice of, and is much displeased with the sin of having any other god.'

First, God taketh special notice of the sin of having any other god.

1. He taketh special notice of the gross sin of idolatry. He has a jealous eye on it, and will not overlook it; for it is spiritual adultery; and the husband will overlook many faults in his wife, who will not overlook that. Idolaters have their fig-leaf covers for their idolatry. How do the Papists set their wits on the rack to frame such nice and subtle distinctions as may palliate their horrid idolatry! But though they may deceive the simple with these things, yet they cannot blind the eyes of the all-seeing God.

Seeing God takes such notice of it, how lamentable is it that idolatry makes such vast progress in this covenanted land, and is not duly noticed! How sad is it, that the sin and dishonour against God is not

noticed, so as to be mourned over, and to take notice of the danger of it, and that the government takes not notice of it to repress it! This is a sad sign of the danger of being over-run with it.

2. God takes special notice of heart idolatry, of whatever possesseth his room in the heart. That is a subtle kind of idolatry, so hid that others cannot, nay men themselves do not always, perceive what it is that is their idol. But God sees it very well.

(1.) The idol may be of a spiritual nature, which the man cannot discern till the law be carried home on the soul in its spiritual extent. Thus Paul's duties and seeming holiness were his idol, Rom. 7:9.

(2.) It may lie in lawful things. Things unlawful in themselves may quickly be seen with the snare in them. It is easy to discern the devil when he appears with his cloven foot, so to speak: but it is not so easy to see a man's ruin lying in houses and lands, husband, wife, and children, goods and gear: yet these may be the idols.

(3.) The idol may go under the name of an infirmity. Thus many deceive themselves with entertaining reigning sins, under the name of infirmities.

(4.) Self-love acts its part here, being ready to magnify men's good, and extenuate their evil. And so they nourish their disease, and hug the viper that is gnawing at their bowels.

Lastly, There may be a judicial stroke in it. They will not entertain the discoveries which God makes them; and they shutting their eyes, the Lord strikes them blind.

But let us specially notice what God has a special eye upon.

Secondly, God is specially displeased with our having any other god.

1. He is displeased with gross idolatry. He shews his special wrath in this life against idolaters, as against the Israelites, for worshipping

the golden calf; and against the ten tribes, for their idolatry at Dan and Bethel. So old Babylon was, and new Babylon will be destroyed. All idolaters will be punished in the other life, Rev. 21:8.

Let us then shew our displeasure against, and resolve in the Lord's strength, to oppose the spreading of idolatry, chusing rather to suffer than sin.

2. He is displeased with the idols which men set up in their hearts. He shews his displeasure several ways.

(1.) Sometimes the Lord, in the fury of his jealousy, forces the idol out of the way, as he did, in the case of Micah's idol, Judg. 18:24.

(2.) Sometimes he reduces the man to a necessity of parting either with his idol or his profession.

(3.) Oft-times the Lord makes the idol men's plague and punishment.

(4.) Lastly, Oft-times there is a rub by a torrent of temptation, that brings forth the idol in its own colours; as in the case of Judas' covetousness, and Demas' love of the world.

Let us therefore cast away our idols, and let nothing keep God's room in our hearts, especially in such a day when God is rising up to plead against us.

From the whole ye may see that the commandment is exceeding broad. Be humbled under the sense of your guilt in the breach of this command. And see what great need ye have to reform; and what need ye stand in of the blood of Christ for removing your guilt, and of his Spirit for cleansing your hearts, and subduing your iniquities.

OF THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

EXOD. 20:4, 5, 6.—Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing, that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

THE second command comes now to be explained; and this is it, though the Papists will not allow it to be so: And it is so plain against them, that they leave it out of their catechisms and books of devotion which they put into the people's hands, joining the reason of it, For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, &c. unto the first command; and so they count the third the second, the fourth the third, &c. and split the tenth into two (to make up the number), though the apostle expresses it in one word, 'Thou shalt not covet.' And indeed they have reason to hide it; for if they should let it come to the light, it would open the mystery of their iniquity among their blinded people, and spoil the most part of their devotions, whereof idols and images have the largest share.

As the first command fixeth the object of worship, so this fixes the means and ways of worship. The scope of it is to bind us to the external worship of God, and that in the way that he himself has instituted, and that we may be spiritual in his worship. We may take it up in two things.

1. The command itself. 2. The reasons annexed.

The command itself we have, ver. 4 and part of ver. 5. I shall consider the command.

The command is proposed negatively; and two things are here expressly forbidden.

First, The making of images for religious use and service, Lev. 26:1. And that it is thus meant, and not of civil or political images is plain from this, that it is a command of the first table, and so relates to divine worship. And our God is very particular in this point.

1. Graven images are forbidden particularly, that is, images cut or carved in wood, stone, or the like, called statues. These are particularly expressed, not only because they were the chief among idolaters, but because they do so lively represent men, beasts, &c. in all their parts and members, that nothing seems to be wanting in them but life; and so people are most ready to be deceived by them. But that we may see it is not these only that are abominable to our God.

2. Every similitude whatsoever for religious use and service is forbidden, whether it is done by casting in a mould, painting, weaving, or made any way whatsoever, though it be merely by the imagination, and not by the hand; for the words are universal, any likeness. How particular is this command in things themselves, whereof idolaters would have the images.

1st, No graven image, nor any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, must be made for religious worship. By the heavens above, is meant the air, and all to the starry heavens, and the seat of the blessed. In the visible heavens are the birds, sun, moon, and stars. No likeness of these is to be made; and therefore, to paint the Holy Spirit as a dove is idolatrous. In the seat of the blessed are God himself, angels, and saints, i. e. the spirits of just men made perfect, all invisible; so that it is impiety, yea, and madness, to frame images of them.

2dly, No graven image or likeness of any thing that is in the earth beneath is to be made for religious service, whether they be on the surface, or in the bowels of the earth. Now, in the earth are men, beasts, trees, plants, the dead bodies of men, &c. No likeness of these is to be made for religious worship.

3dly, No graven image, or likeness of any thing that is in the water under the earth, is to be made. Now, these are fishes whatsoever the rivers and seas do produce. But no likeness of these is to be made for religious service.

But why so particular? This is deservedly inquired, when the first command, and most of the rest, are in so very few words. Ans. 1. Because the worship of God commanded here is not so much natural as in the first command, but instituted; and so nature's light can be of less service than in the first: for though the light of nature teacheth that God is to be worshipped, it cannot tell us how he will be worshipped, or in what particular way.

2. Because there is a special proneness in the nature of man to corrupt the worship and ordinances of God. Of old the worship of God was corrupted with vile idolatries and superstitions all the world over, but among the Jews, and frequently among them too. Ye will often read of the Jews falling in with the worship of the nations; but of any nation falling in with theirs, never, Jer. 2:11. And so is it at this day among the Papists, yea, and other churches, as the church of England, and the Greek churches; and there are few Protestant churches, where these ordinances are not changed in greater or lesser measure.

3. There is a peculiar bias in corrupt nature to idolatry. It is natural for men to desire to see what they worship, Rom. 1:23. Exod. 32:1 and to have a pompous worship. There is a natural weakness in the corrupt minds of men, whereby they are easily impressed by idols and images for religious service, ready to fancy something of divinity in them.

4. There is a peculiar hellish zeal that accompanies idolatry, to multiply gods, and to be most keen in the worship of them; like as it is seen in corporal adultery in those who have once prostituted their honour, Jer. 50:38. If you ask, what can put Papists, being men and not devils, on those horrid practices, of which we spake on the fast-

day*? I answer, Their idolatrous religion inspires them with that hellish fury, 1 Kings 18:28. Psal. 106:36, 37, 38. So doe sit on multiplying them; for this particularity shews that almost from every part of the universe the heathens fetched their idols. And as the heathens had, so the Papists have, their idols and images of things in heaven, of God, angels, saints; and want not their queen of heaven, as well as the Pagans had. The earth furnishes them with an image of the cross, and with reliques and images of the dead. Remarkable is that which the author of the apocryphal book of Wisdom, which to the Papists is canonical scripture, chap. 14:15 gives as the original of idolatry, to wit, That a father, in bitterness for his son's death, made an image of his dead son, and first honoured him as a dead man, at length as a god, &c. And as the Pagans had their gods to be applied to by persons of several callings, countries, diseases, &c. so the Papists are well high even with them in that. The Pagans had their gods for the seamen, shepherds, husbandmen, &c.; so the Papists have St. Nicholas for the seamen, St. Wendolin for the shepherd, St. John Baptist for the husbandman, St. Magdalene for the whore, as the Pagans had Flora. The family and country gods are a prodigious number, St. Andrew for Scotland, St. George for England, St. Patrick for Ireland, St. Denys for France, St. James for Spain, &c. And that god-making power that is in the Pope and his Cardinals to canonize any deceased person they think worthy, may fill the world with them. Gods they have almost for every disease. What wonder then that the command is so particular?

Lastly, Because the Lord has (so to speak) a particular zeal for his own worship, and against idolatry. Thus he pursues them out of all their starting-holes. He will not allow them an image of any thing in the heaven above, of any thing under heaven, or in the earth, or of any thing in the waters under the earth. Where then shall they have them but from hell, where the devil and damned spirits are?

Secondly, The worshipping of them is forbidden.

1. The very bowing to them is forbidden, whether it be the bowing of the whole body, bowing the knee, or bowing the head, and much more prostrating ourselves before them, and so consequently uncovering the head. Men may think it a small thing to use such a gesture before them, if they do not pray to them, &c. but our jealous God forbids, the lowest degree of religious worship to them, and for civil worship they are not capable of it, Gen. 23:7.

2. The serving of them. This implies whatsoever service the true God required of his worshippers, or the Pagans gave to their idols. So the serving of them lies in these things, setting them up on high, carrying them in processions, erecting temples, chapels, altars to them, making vows to them, praying to them, offering incense to them, and dedicating days to them. All which the Papists do to their idols.

The Papists will tell you, they do not worship them absolutely, but relatively; not ultimately, but mediately; whereby they beguile unstable souls. But the command strikes through all these fig-leaf covers, and says absolutely we must not worship them, nor give them the lowest degree of worship: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, &c.—Thou shalt not bow unto them, nor serve them.

But we have not the full meaning of the negative part of this command. Does it only forbid the making and worshipping of images? No. Remember the rule, That where one sort of sin is expressed in a command, all others of that kind are included. When in the seventh command adultery is forbidden, all manner of uncleanness is forbidden, though one of the grossest sort only is named. So here, when the corrupting of the worship of God by images is forbidden, all other corruptions whatsoever of God's worship are included.

The matter of this command is the worship of God and his ordinances; and it says to every man, Thou shalt not make any thing whereby thou wilt worship God. And as the seventh command meets him that defiles his neighbour's wife, saying, Thou shalt not commit

adultery; so this meets the church of Rome, and says, Thou shalt not make any graven image, &c. But as the seventh says also to the fornicator, Thou shalt not commit uncleanness; so this says also to the church of England, thou shalt not make crossing in baptism, kneeling, bowing to the altar, festival days, &c.—And to every sort of people, and to every particular person, it says, thou shalt not meddle to make any thing of divine worship and ordinances out of thy own head.

All holy ordinances and parts of worship God has reserved to himself the making of them for us, saying, with respect to these, Thou shalt not make them to thyself. Men are said, in scripture, to make a thing to themselves, when they make it out of their own head, without the word of God for it. But when they make any thing according to God's word, God is said to do it, Matt. 19:6. If there be not then a divine law for what is brought into the worship and ordinances of God, it is an idol of men's making, a device of their own. And so Popery, Prelacy, ceremonies, and whatsoever is without the word, brought in God's matters, is overturned at once by his word. Thou shalt not make, be thou Pope, King, Parliament, minister, private person, synod, or council. So ye see it is not only the making of images, but worshipping and serving them, that is forbidden.

Next, by the same rule, whereas this command forbids not only the making of images, but bowing to them, and serving them, though they be made by others, that is not all that is included in that. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them. But the meaning of it further is, Whatever any make without the word, in the matter of God's worship and ordinances, thou shalt not comply with it, approve of it, or use it. So that to thee they must be as if they were not made at all, make them who will, under whatever pretence, whether of decency or strictness, seeing God has not made them. To the law and to the testimony, be of what party they will, if they speak not according to this word, fear them not to comply with them in what they advance in God's matters, that is not according thereto. So much for the negative part of this command.

The positive part of it is implied, according to the rule, That every negative implies an affirmative part. It consists in these two things.

1. Thou shalt worship the Lord, and him shalt thou serve; worship him with external worship. This is implied in that, Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them. This says, But thou shalt bow down to me, and serve me. Even as due benevolence betwixt married persons is implied in that, Thou shalt not commit adultery. Internal worship is the worship required in the first, external in the second command. There is a generation that do not worship images, but they lie fair for it, if it were once come in fashion; it is those that do not worship God, they do not bow down to him, nor serve him. They say, God looks to the heart, and they hope and trust in him, and give their hearts to him, though they do not go about the outward worship as some others do, but their hearts are as true with God as theirs for all that. These, I say, lie fair for worshipping images; for if the devil were come, their house is empty, swept, and garnished. They may worship idols, for they do not worship God in secret, or in their families. If the book-prayers of England, and the idolatrous prayers of Rome, were come to their hand, there is no other worship to be put out for them, for they have no other.

What they talk of their hearts towards God, therein they join with the Papists, who put the second command out of the number of the ten. For the worship of God which they slight on that pretence, is the very worship required in this command. Now, let us try whether ye that will hold with the worship of the heart, or this command that requires outward bodily worship too, has most reason on your side.

1st, Is not God the God of the whole man, the body as well as the soul? Christ has redeemed the body as well as the soul; the Spirit dwells in the bodies of his people as well as their souls. The whole man, soul and body, is taken into the covenant. The body shall be glorified in heaven as well as the soul, or burn in hell as well as the soul. Is it not highly reasonable, then, that we worship God with

outward bodily worship, as well as with the inward worship of the heart?

2dly, God will not only be worshipped by us, but glorified before men, Matth. 16:24. But our inward worship cannot do that, for that is what none can know but God and our own souls. Therefore outward worship is necessary. If men will be accounted God's servants, why will they not take on his badge?

3dly, Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh in other cases, and why not in this? The apostle says grace in the hearts appears by the mouth to the honour of God, Rom. 10:10. And though outward worship may be performed where there is no inward in the heart, yet if the heart be a temple to God, the smoke will rise up from the altar, and appear without in outward worship.

Lastly, Outward worship is not only a sign of the inward, but it is a help and furtherance to it. Prayer is a blessed mean to increase our love to God, sorrow for sin, faith, hope, and other parts of heart-worship. So, the partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, another part of external worship, in the profane neglect of which many live, is not only a mean appointed, whereby we publicly profess ourselves engaged to the Lord, but is the mean to strengthen faith, and confirm our union and communion with him.

2. Thou shalt fall in with and use the external worship and ordinances which God has appointed. This is implied in that, Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, &c. They are made already, God has made them, and ye must use those that God has made, that worship, and those ordinances. And thus, by this command we are bound to all the parts of God's worship, and to all his ordinances appointed in his word. If we neglect any of them, it is at our peril. It is not enough to leave idolatrous or superstitious worship and ordinances, but we must inquire what are the Lord's, statutes, that we may do them.

I come now to that question, 'What is required in the second commandment? The second commandment requireth the receiving observing, and keeping pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his word.'

In handling this point, I shall shew,

I. What is that religious worship, and those ordinances, which God hath appointed in his word.

II. What is our duty with reference to those ordinances.

I. I shall shew what is that religious worship, and those ordinances which God hath appointed in his word. That God has appointed that religious worship, and those ordinances, whereby we are outwardly to glorify him, is evident from this, that God will be so honoured by us, yet has forbidden us to make any thing that way, consequently they are made by himself in his word. These ordinances appointed in the word are,

1. Prayer, whereby we tender to him the homage due from a creature to his Creator, acknowledging our dependence on him as the Author of all good. The parts of it are petition, confession, and thanksgiving. And that public in the assemblies, Acts 2:42; private in lesser societies, particularly in families, Jer. 10 ult; and secret, every one by himself, Mat. 6:6 none of them to jostle out another. In these we are tied to no form.

2. Praises in singing psalms, whereby we give him the praise due to him. And this is appointed, both publicly, Psal. 149:1 and privately, Jam. 5:13. This is to be done in all simplicity becoming the gospel, singing them with grace in the heart, Col. 3:16; not playing them on musical instruments, of which there is not one word in the New Testament.

3. Reading God's word, and hearing it read, both publicly, Acts 15:21 and privately, John 5:39; whereby we honour God, consulting his

oracles.

4. The preaching of the word, and hearing it preached, 2 Tim. 4:2. 2 Kings 4:23. And consequently the ministry is an ordinance of God, Rom. 10:15. Eph. 4:11, 12 and the maintenance thereof, 1 Cor. 9:14 by an ordinance of God, though there should be no ordinance of the state for it.

5. Administration and receiving of the sacraments, to wit, baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Matt. 28:19 and the Lord's supper, 1 Cor. 11:23, &c. both which are left us in much gospel-simplicity. By these we solemnly avouch ourselves to be the Lord's, and receive the seals of the covenant, getting our faith of covenant-blessings confirmed.

6. Fasting, or extraordinary prayer with fasting, when the Lord by his providence calls for it, as when tokens of his anger do in a special manner appear. And this is public, in the congregation, Joel 2:12, 13 and private too, as in families, 1 Cor. 7:5 and secret, Matth. 6:17, 18. See Zech. 12:12, 13, 14. The same is to be said of extraordinary prayer, with thanksgiving.

7. Church government and discipline. Christ has appointed a government in his church, and has not left it to men to dispose of it, Heb. 3:5, 6. 1 Cor. 12:28. He has appointed his officers, which are pastors and doctors, Eph. 4:11 ruling elders and deacons, 1 Cor. 12:28. And besides these the scripture knows no ordinary church-officers. The three first are, by his appointment, church-rulers. They have the power of discipline, Matth. 18:17, 18 to rebuke scandalous offenders publicly, 1 Tim. 6:20 to excommunicate the contumacious, 1 Cor. 5:4, 5. And amongst these officers of the same kind there is a parity by divine appointment, excluding both Pope and Prelate, Matth. 20:26. There is also a subordination of judicatories, Acts 15 which is the government we call Presbyterial.

8. Instructing and teaching in the ways of the Lord, not only by ministers, but by masters of families, who are to teach their families, Gen. 18:19. Deut. 6:6, 7.

9. Lastly, Spiritual conference, Mal. 3:16. Deut. 6:7 and swearing, of which we shall treat in the third commandment.

II. I shall shew what is our duty with reference to these ordinances. It is fourfold.

1. We must receive them in our principles and profession. We must carry them as the badge of our subjection to our God, Micah 4:5.

2. We must observe them in our practice, Matth. 18:20. For what end do we receive these ordinances, if we make no conscience of the practice of them? We will be in that case as the servant that knew his master's will, but did it not. So here there is a number of duties laid on us by this command. It requires us also to pray, ministers to pray publicly and the people to join; masters of families to pray in their families, and the family to join with them; and each of us to pray in secret. It requires all of us to sing the Lord's praises, privately and publicly. It requires church-officers to exercise church discipline, and offenders to submit thereunto, &c. &c.

3. We must do our duty to keep them pure, that nothing of men's inventions be added to them, and that whatever others mix with them, we adhere to the purity of ordinances, 1 Cor. 11:2.

4. We must do our duty to keep them entire, that nothing be taken from them, Deut. 12 ult. for both adding and paring in these matters are abominable to the Lord.

Finally, It requires us, in consequence of this, to disapprove, detest, and oppose, according to our several places and stations, all worship that is not appointed of God, whether superstitious or idolatrous, and, according to our several places and stations, to endeavour the removal of the same, Acts 17:16, 17. Deut. 7:5.

I proceed to consider what is forbidden in the second commandment. Ans. 'The second commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in his word.' The sum of the second commandment is, That we worship God according as he has appointed in his word, and no otherwise. Hence there are two ways in the general, whereby this command is broken, viz. by irreligion and false worship.

FIRST, Irreligion is the not shewing a due regard to, and not duly complying with the worship and ordinances appointed by God in his word, Job 15:4. It is a sin against this command in defect, as false worship is in excess. It is a not worshipping of God with external worship and by means appointed, as false worship is worshipping in a way not appointed. And it is as much forbidden in this command, as to have no God at all is in the first. There are several sorts of that irreligion all here forbidden.

1. The not receiving, but rejecting the worship and ordinances of God, Hos. 8:12. This is the sin, (1.) Of atheists, who, as they have no reverence for God, seeing they deny him, do also reject his worship. (2.) Of Quakers, who throw off almost the whole external worship and ordinances of God, under the pretence of worshipping him in spirit. (3.) Of all those who do not receive, but reject any one ordinance of God whatsoever, as some do singing of psalms, others the sacraments, others the government instituted by Christ, &c.

2. All neglect of God's worship and ordinances, in not observing them in their practice. The neglect of these, though men do not professedly reject them, is very offensive, Exod. 4:24, 25. So in this command is forbidden,

- 1st, The neglect of prayer, Psal. 14:4. How can they read or hear this command without a check, who do not bow a knee to God? This command forbids,

(1.) The neglect of public prayer in the congregation; whereof people are guilty when they unnecessarily absent themselves from the public ordinances, or, through laziness or carelessness, the prayers are over ere they come; or unnecessarily go away and leave public prayers; or do not in their hearts join and go along with the speaker in them.

(2.) The neglect of family worship, and prayers particularly, Jer. 10 ult. Christian families should be churches, wherein God should be worshipped. It is the sin of the whole family, especially of the heads thereof, when it is neglected. I say the whole, because it must needs be offensive to God, that while his worship lies neglected in a family, there is none there willing to take it up, and supply the defect. Besides, there is a neglect of it, where it is performed, viz. when any members of the family neglect to join therein, but unnecessarily absent themselves, or being present do not join in their hearts with the speaker.

(3.) The neglect of secret prayer. It is a positive ordinance of God, Matth. 6:6 and the neglect of it, as it will not readily be the sin of those exercised to godliness, Cant. 7:11 so it is a sad sign of little desire of communion with God.

2dly, The neglect of singing the Lord's praises, whether in public or in private. There are some who sit mute like fishes in the congregation praising God, who are ready enough to rant in the congregation of drunkards. There are no psalms sung in their families, for they are strangers to spiritual mirth; but they can laugh and sing to express their carnal mirth.

3dly, The neglect of reading, and hearing the word read, in public, private, or secret. Has God commanded to search the scriptures, and will men be such neglecters of it? What irreligion is it thus to neglect the word of life, our Father's testament, the book of God that teaches the way to eternal happiness?

4thly, The neglect of preaching the word is the sin of ministers, 2 Tim. 4:1, 2. This is to starve souls, instead of feeding them, which will make a dreadful account. So this command condemns, (1.) The practice of the lordly prelates, the least of whose work is preaching the gospel. They will needs have Timothy a bishop: with what face can they read, then, that solemn charge, 2 Tim. 4:1, 2. 'I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ;—preach the word; be instant in season, and out of season,' &c. who (as if they would give us the perfect reverse of John the Baptist's character) are found more in the palace than the pulpit? Matth. 11:7, 8. (2.) Their devolving this work upon their curates and parsons, who often devolve it again upon their hirelings. Ezek. 44:8. (3.) Ministers having plurality of benefices and charges, whereby it is rendered impossible for them to feed them as is necessary unless they could be in several parishes at once. (4.) The non-residence of ministers, whereby they are under the same incapacity. (5.) All negligence of ministers, whereby they lightly, and without weighty grounds, leave their flocks destitute of the preaching of the word, shorter or longer time.

5thly, The neglect of hearing the word. People are thus guilty when they totally absent themselves from the public ordinances, Heb. 10:25. It is lamentable to think how God is dishonoured, and graceless people hardened, by the prevailing of this among us. Whatever religion men place in this, this command makes it irreligion. If we be in our duty to preach, people are out of their duty that neglect to hear. Thus are people also guilty, when without any necessity they do at any time absent themselves, and when they rove and wander, and do not attend to the word preached when present.

6thly, Ministers neglecting the administration of the sacraments. God has joined them together with the word in their commission, and therefore the neglect of any of them must be their sin. Christ has ordered the sacrament of his supper to be often celebrated, 1 Cor. 11:26 though he has not determined how often. I know no church so guilty in this point as our own.

7thly, People's neglecting of the sacraments, to receive them. Thus people bring guilt on themselves, by slighting and neglecting the ordinance of baptism, Luke 7:30 unduly delaying the baptism of their children; and also in slighting the sacrament of the Lord's supper, 2 Chron. 30:10. Is it not a strange thing how men get their consciences satisfied, while they neglect one opportunity after another, and live in the avowed neglect of an uncontroverted ordinance?

8thly, the neglect of the duty of fasting and prayer, when the Lord by his providence calls for it, whether public, or private, or secret. The neglect of public fasting and prayer is the sin of the church of Scotland at this day, seeing that our melancholy circumstances do evidently hold forth the call of providence thereto. And for family-fasts, how is that duty absolutely neglected in most families though there is no family but sometimes has a private call thereto, by some stroke threatened or lying on them, &c.? And how many are absolute strangers to secret personal fasting and prayer, though they want not calls thereto, either from their temporal or spiritual case? Matth. 7:21. Thus may the church, families, and particular persons, be guilty in the neglect of thanks-giving for mercies.

9thly, The neglect of the exercise of church-discipline by church-judicatories, greater or lesser, in order to the purging of the church of scandalous members, Rev. 2:14. This has been and is the sin of the church of Scotland, for which God may justly take his keys out of our hand. And now matters are come to that pass in most congregations, through the land, and has ever so been in this congregation since I knew it, that the vigorous exercise of discipline cannot be to edification*, Gal. 5:12 the disease being turned too strong for the cure. May the Lord convince them powerfully, and check them effectually, that make it so!

10thly, The neglect of catechising and instructing the weak. Thus ministers are guilty when they are not at pains to catechise; and those who will not be at pains to wait on diets of examination, but

shun it time after time, and will rather enjoy their ignorance than come to learn. So masters of families are guilty who are at no pains to instruct their wives, children, and servants, in the principles of religion; and such as neglect that opportunity of family-catechising. You want not good helps to this; why may ye not take a Catechism, such as Allein's &c. and ask the questions, and cause them to answer? It would be a good spending of the Sabbath, profitable to you and them too.

Lastly, The neglect of spiritual conference, when God puts an opportunity in our hands, especially on the Lord's day, when our talk in a special manner is required to be spiritual, and we have the advantage of speaking of the Lord's word, which we have heard.

3. All curtailing and mincing of God's worship and ordinances, not keeping them entire, Deut. 12 ult. Men are guilty of this,

1st, When they reject any part of an ordinance instituted by Christ, and so leave it defective and lame, as the Papists in taking away the cup from the people, and the reading of the scriptures in private, &c.

2dly, When they receive some of Christ's ordinances, but not all. Thus,

(1.) Churches sin, when they receive his doctrine and worship, but not the government and discipline appointed in his house. A sad defect in some churches since the reformation, where all Christ's ordinances could not get place; as if it had been left to men what to take and what to refuse of his institutions.

(2.) Families sin, mincing God's worship and ordinances. Some will sing and read, but not pray; some pray, but do not read and sing. Some will worship God in their families in the evening, but no morning-sacrifice can get room there for their throng. Some will do all, but neglect family catechising or instruction.

(3.) Particular persons sin. How men pick and chuse the institutions of God? Some wait on public ordinances, but make no conscience of private ordinances. Some, again, go about the private exercises of religion, but slight public ordinances. Some hear the word ordinarily, but they are habitual neglecters of the sacrament. Some pray in secret, but they pray not in their families; some in their families, but they have nothing to say to God, but what they can say before all their family; their family-prayers jumble out their secret prayers. Is this to keep God's worship and ordinances entire? How can men answer to God for this way of it?

(4.) Contempt of God's worship and ordinances, Matth. 21:5. Mal. 1:7. This is a crying sin of our day, that is like to fill up our cup to the brim, 2 Chron. 36:16. God has a special zeal for his own worship and ordinances, and therefore contempt of them must be dangerous to a degree. There are several sorts of this contempt of God's worship and ordinances, whereby men are guilty.

1st, Inward irreverence, when we come to or are at ordinances without due fear of God on our spirits, Eccl. 5:1; when we rush into the presence of God, in public, private, or secret duties, without that composure of spirit which an approach to the great God requires; when we do not prepare to meet with God in his ordinances, but stand not to touch the holy things of God with unholy, unsanctified hands.

2dly, Outward irreverence in holy ordinances, which is a plain contempt cast on them, Mal. 1:12, 13. Such are all foolish gestures in the time of divine worship, talking one with another, and much more laughing, whether in the church or the family. They are foolish, void of discretion, as well as the fear of God, that give up themselves to these things, and know neither God nor themselves. And those are also guilty of irreverence who sleep at ordinances, public or private, Acts 20:9.

3dly, An open and avowed contempt of God's ordinances, Job 21:14, 15. O what guilt is on the generation this way! They do not worship God in his ordinances, and they are not ashamed of it. They do not pray, and they will not avow it. It is below them to bow a knee to God, especially in their families. They neglect the hearing of the word, and they glory in it. If we offer to touch them any manner of way, they will not come to the church again. They will loiter at home for months together, and think it no fault. They never communicate, and they are not ashamed of it. Contempt of ordinances has been a crying sin in Ettrick these seven years, whatever it was before.

4thly, Contumacy, in not submitting to the discipline of Christ's house. People are not ashamed to sin and give scandal; they think not that below them; but they will commit their scandalous offences, get drunk, swear, revel, fight one with another, as if they would regard the laws neither of God nor man. But whatever be their scandals, if it be not fornication or adultery, they condemn and slight the discipline of Christ's house. With what contempt do many entertain church government at this day!

5thly, Mocking those who make conscience of God's worship, Is. 28:22. Dreadful is that contempt where God's ordinances are made a jest of, and a man is treated like a fool, because he makes conscience of his duty towards God. Mock at preaching and praying as men will, the day will come when they will change their note.

Lastly, Simony, Acts 8:18. It is a desire of buying or selling spiritual things, or things annexed to them, whether the bargain succeed or not; as buying or selling of baptism, &c. or an office appointed by Christ in his house. This prevails in corrupt times of the church, especially under patronages, is oft-times the sin of those that are getting into the ministry, and of such as are concerned about them, when they take indirect methods, by themselves or friends, to get into charges by Simoniackal pactions, whether by gifts from the hand or from the tongue. And somewhat of this nature is the sin of scandalous curates, and of those that deal with them, who will for

money marry people without testimonials, basely prostituting God's ordinance.

5. Hindering God's worship and ordinances, Matt. 23:13. Thus men are guilty of the breach of this commandment.

1st, In hindering God's public worship; which may be done many ways. As, (1.) By the magistrates' laws or force against ministers preaching the word, and going about other duties of their station, Acts 4:18. (2.) By sacrilege, taking away any thing that is necessary for the maintenance of God's worship, and which has been devoted for that end, as the maintenance of ministers and the like, Rom. 2:22. (3.) By discouraging ministers by calumnies, reproaches, and all hard usage, which may make them drive heavily in their work. (4.) Putting in and keeping scandalous men in the ministry, 1 Sam. 2:17. (5.) Men's keeping back those that are under them from attending the public worship. If any be so tied to their worldly affairs that there is no way to relieve them on the Lord's day for many Sabbaths together, it is their sin that tie them so, and theirs that tie themselves so; though I am apt to believe it is but an excuse that some godless creatures make for themselves.

2dly, Hindering family-worship; which may be done many ways; as by a too eager and unseasonable pursuit of worldly business, till neither time nor strength is left for it; shuffling it off by this and the other thing that is to be done, and not watching the season for it; strife and contention in families, especially betwixt husband and wife, 1 Pet. 3:7 any member of the family drawing back, and creating disorder.

3dly, Hindering secret worship; as not allowing people time to seek the Lord in secret, mocking or discouraging those that do so, &c.

To which we may add, our not doing what we can to further the worship of God in public, private or secret; for it is not enough that

we do not hinder it, but what do we to further it? Heb. 10:24, 25; the not stirring up the lazy and careless, and putting them on their duty.

Lastly, Opposing God's worship and ordinances, public, private, or secret. This is more than to hinder them, Acts 13:44, 45. So are guilty, (1.) Persecutors, Acts 4:18. (2.) Those that are fond of their own inventions, set themselves to cast out, or hold out, God's true worship and ordinances out of the church: the sin of many at this day. (3.) Opposing the settlement of parishes with gospel-ministers called according to the word, which, on prejudices and mistaken points of honour, has been and is the sin of many in the land. (4.) Lastly, All such as any way set themselves against God's worship, in public, in congregations, families, or secret. This will be found, whatever people think of it, a fighting against God, Acts 5:39.

SECONDLY, I come now to speak of false worship and ordinances, which is worship and ordinances not instituted or appointed by God himself. And this is expressly forbidden, Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, &c. Deut. 12 ult. It is not only a sin not to worship God, and not to regard his ordinances, but to worship him in a way which he has not instituted, to bring in ordinances that bear not his stamp. Of this there are two sorts.

First, Idolatry. There is a sort of idolatry forbidden in the first command that respects the object of worship, when we worship any other than the true God. But the idolatry here forbidden respects the means of worship, when we make use of idols or images in worship, even though we intend ultimately the worshipping of the true God. And here is condemned,

1. All religious imagery; for of images and pictures for a civil or political use merely, the command is not to be understood; for the command being of the first table, plainly respects religion, Lev. 26:1; and the art of cutting, carving, &c. is a gift of God, Exod. 31:3–5; and has had God's allowance for the exercise of it, 1 Kings 6:29. Now, under this article of religious imagery is forbidden,

1st, The making any representation or image of God in our mind, all carnal imaginations of him, as to conceive of him like a reverend old man, &c. Acts 17:29 for God is the object of our understanding, not our imagination, being invisible. This is mental idolatry, which the best are in hazard of.

2dly, The making any outward representation of God by any image. Remarkable is the connection of the first and second command: Thou shalt have no other gods before me: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, &c. It is impossible to get any bodily likeness that can truly represent God as he is; and therefore men that, over the belly of reason and God's own will, will needs have representations of God, are fain to betake themselves to images of some corruptible thing, the very thing condemned in the heathens, Rom. 1:23. And therefore it is abominable imagery, and highly injurious to the great God, to represent him any manner of way. Such abominations are the representing of God by a sun shining with beams, with the name JEHOVAH in it or over it, as in several Bibles: the representing of the Father by an image of an old man, the Son by that of a lamb, or a young man; or the Father by a large shining sun, the Son by a lesser sun shining, and the Holy Ghost by a dove, as in some great Bibles from England. It is lamentable to think how frequent of late the blasphemous pictures of Christ hanging on the cross are grown among Protestants, by Rome's art, no doubt to fit the nations for their idolatry. All these are directly contrary to God's word, Isa. 40:18. Deut. 4:15, 19.

Though Christ be a man, yet he is God too, and therefore no image can nor may represent him. Yea, what image can there be of his body now, seeing he never sat for it? He is now glorified, and so cannot be pictured as he is even in his human nature. There is nothing more ready to beget mean thoughts of Christ, Hab. 2:18; and if it should stir up devotion, that is worshipping by an image, which is idolatry here forbidden.

3dly, The having of these images, though we do not worship them. For if it be a sin in itself to make them, how can they be innocent that keep them? Deut. 7:5. It is a strange inconsistency in some to pretend to abhor images, and yet themselves will keep them. They may be a snare to others, and therefore should be removed, blotted or torn out of books, if in them. For their very being is an injury to the great, invisible, and incomprehensible Majesty.

4thly, Images of false gods, such as the heathens worshipped, and of such angels and saints as the Papists worship, we should beware of, because of the danger of idolatry, Exod. 32:8. Hezekiah destroyed the brazen serpent, that had been abused to idolatry. A zeal against them as God's rivals, which have got the worship due to him, is very natural to a child of God touched with God's honour, Psal. 16:4.

5thly, Images of God, Christ, angels, or saints, ought not to be set up in churches or places of worship, though men do not worship them. (1.) Because they are monuments of idolatry, that ought to be removed, Deut. 7:5; and destroyed, Exod. 23:24. (2.) Hezekiah is commended for breaking the brazen serpent, because the children of Israel burnt incense to it, 2 Kings 18:4. (3.) It is stumbling, as an occasion of idolatry, and as it prejudices Turks and Jews against the Christian religion, and grieves the hearts of tender Christians.

2. All idolatrous worship is forbidden here as abominable idolatry, Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them. The sorts of idolatry forbidden here, are,

1st, Worshipping false gods by images, as the heathens did their Jupiter, Apollo, and the rest. Such was the worship of Baal among the idolatrous Israelites, Rom. 11:4.

2dly, Worshipping the images themselves of God, Christ, and saints, which is contrary to the very letter of this command. See Lev. 26:1. The Papists are most abominable idolaters in this respect bowing to stocks and stones. Their principles allow them a worship more than

civil, which they call service, and that for the images themselves properly; contrary to the express words of this command, Thou shalt not serve them, Gal. 4:8. And the images of God and Christ get the most plain divine worship, though some distinguish, they get it not for themselves, but for what they represent. But get it as they will, it is plain they do get it, and that therefore the Papists are as real idolaters as ever the Pagans were, worshipping the work of their own hands. And accordingly they bow down to images, kiss them, offer incense to them, pray to them, &c.

3dly, Worshipping God in and by an image. The Papists wipe their mouth, and say, they have not sinned, when they do not believe the image to be God, and do not terminate their worship on the image itself, but worship God in and by it. And when they have said this, what say they more than what the heathens had to say, and did say to the Christians of old? Did they believe that their images were the very gods they worshipped? Nay, they made many images of one god, as of Jupiter; and when they grew old, they eat them off, and got new ones. But did they change their gods? No, Jer. 2:11. Were not the Israelites abominable idolaters in the worship of the golden calf? Psal. 106:19, 20. Yet they did but worship Jehovah by it, Exod. 32:5. So Jeroboam's golden calves were intended but as means whereby to worship the true God, 1 Kings 12:26. So the calf-worship remained after Baal's worship was destroyed out of Israel by Jehu. The same was the case with Micah's idolatry, Judg. 17:13 and 18:6.

4thly, The worshipping of a man for some relation to God, of the Pope as God's vicar on earth. They call him their Lord, and a God upon earth. And when he is new made, he is twice set upon the altar, and worshipped by the cardinals. And he does not only admit the kissing of his feet, but expects and requires it as Christ's vicar. He is carried in procession, as the heathens carried their idols, and they themselves the sacrament, which they account God, great and small worshipping him as a God, if they think the honour redounds to God, so did Cornelius, Acts 10:25, 26.

Lastly, The same idolatry is in their worshipping angels, saints, reliques, the cross, bread in the sacrament, though they think the honour redounds to God. As if saints and angels had some deity in them, or God were present in the cross or reliques, and heard prayers better than any where else.

Secondly, There is superstition and will-worship; that is, whatever (though not idolatry) is brought into religion as a part of it, which God hath not appointed in his word. The command says, Thou shalt not make, &c. that is, but thou shalt receive the worship and ordinances as God hath appointed them, and not add to them of men's inventions, Deut. 1. As irreligion regards not God's ordinances, so superstition brings in others; by irreligion men take away from the ordinances of God, by superstition they add to them. Both are hateful to God. Under this head are forbidden,

1. All making of things to be sin or duty which God hath not made so, Matth. 15:2. Whatever be men's pretences in this, it is an invading of the power and authority of the great Lawgiver, an accusing of his word of imperfection, and very dangerous, Prov. 30:6. This is the great occasion of sad divisions and schisms in the church, while men, not content with plain duty appointed of God, make the conceptions of their own hearts sins and duties, which God never made so, and impose them on others as terms of Christian communion, which superstition can never be sanctified by their fathering it wrongously on the scripture, Prov. 30:6.

2. Religiously abstaining from any thing which God does not require us so to abstain from. Men will have their ordinances as God has his; and O how hard is it to keep men from religious inventions of their own! Col. 2:20, 21. This is sinful in itself, religiously binding up ourselves where God has left us free, as if that could be acceptable service to God, which, like Jeroboam's feast-day, 1 Kings 12 ult. is devised of our own heart. But much more is it so when it justles out plain commanded duty, Matth. 15:5, 6. Such is the withdrawing from

the public ordinances dispensed by Christ's sent servants lawfully called, and not mixed with men's inventions.

3. All unwarrantable observations and expectations of effects from causes which have no such virtue from God, either by the nature he has given them, or by any special appointment of his. Of this sort of superstitions ignorant people are full, being the yet unpurged dregs of Popery and Paganism. Such as,

1st, Looking on such or such accidents as lucky or unlucky, whereby they are filled with fear or hope, as if these things were a part of the bible; as if a hare or a cat cross their way, the salt fall on the table, if they sneeze in the morning when they go out, or stumble in the threshold, the ear tingle, &c.

2dly, Looking on certain days as lucky or unlucky to begin or do a work upon; because there are such days of the week, or of the year, that are called dismal days, or that they are such and such holidays, as some will not yoke their plough on Yule-day, Deut. 18:10.

3dly, Carrying useless things about them for safety from devils, witches, temptations, or dangers: as Papists use to carry the reliques of some saints about their necks. This is not to be expected from the carrying the Bible about with us; for it is only the using it by faith and prayer that prevails; and as little can any such safety be warrantably expected from any kind of wood, &c. and many such like things.

4. All laying an unwarranted weight on circumstances of worship that is appointed of God. And so men keeping by the worship which God has appointed, may be guilty of superstition. As,

1st, When they lay weight upon the place where it is performed, as if it were more holy and acceptable to God, and more beneficial to men, in one place than another; whereas all difference of places is taken away under the gospel. That is superstition to think praying and preaching more holy and profitable in a kirk than in a barn, &c. or on a hill-side than in the church.

2dly, When men lay an unwarranted weight on their bodily posture in worship, carrying these things farther than God requires in his word. Much is made of these external gestures, especially where there is least religion, as in the churches of England and Rome, where these gestures are so appointed and multiplied, that it makes God's worship look very unlike that gravity required of Christians in the worship of God. So men may be guilty, as thinking prayer with their knees on the ground more acceptable than on a cushion, their knees bare than covered, &c.

3dly, Tying the worship of God to certain accidents, as to pray when one sneezeth, and say, God bless. This is originally a heathenish custom. Sneezing was so much observed among them, that it came at length to be accounted a god; and it was their usual prayer, when one sneezed, God save.

4thly, Laying weight upon instruments, administrators of ordinances, as if they were of more efficacy being administered by one than another having the same divine mission, and administering them according to the same institution of Christ.

5thly, Laying an unwarrantable weight on such a number of prayers, and reading such a number of chapters, and hearing such a number of sermons. And, in a word, laying weight on any thing about God's worship where God has laid none.

Lastly, All additions and inventions of men in God's worship and ordinances, Deut. 12 ult. With these the worship and ordinances of God are mightily corrupted in some churches. All these are here forbidden: As,

1st, The five sacraments the Papists have added to the two appointed by Christ, as orders, penance, marriage, confirmation, and extreme unction.

2dly, The Apocryphal books they have added to the scriptures of the Old Testament.

3dly, The officers in the church that the Papists have added to those appointed by Christ, Popes, Cardinals, Patriarchs, &c. and which with them Prelatists have added, Archbishops, Bishops, Deans, &c.

4thly, The holidays they have added to the Lord's day.

Lastly, The heap of insignificant ceremonies wherewith the worship of God is burdened in Popery, and in the church of England. These are inventions of men, most of which the English service-book has borrowed from Papists who had many of them from the Pagans.

The patrons of false worship, whether idolatrous or superstitious, have a special respect to their own inventions, because they are their own, Psal. 106:39; and go about to impose them on others, under the pretence of their being delivered to them from great and good men, Matt. 15:2, 9; their antiquity, 1 Pet. 1:18; custom, Jer. 44:17; devotion, Isa. 65:5; good intent, 1 Sam. 15:21. But what we call for is divine warrant, Who hath required these things at your hands? There are several ways how people may be guilty of the breach of this command with respect to a false religion and worship.

1. The tolerating of it by those who have power to suppress it, Rev. 2:14.
2. By divising it, Numb. 15:39.
3. By counselling to follow it, Deut. 13:6, 7, 8.
4. By commanding it, Hos. 5:11.
5. By using it, 1 Kings 11:33.
6. Lastly, By any wise approving it.

Let us abhor the idolatry of Popery, and the superstitions of the church of England, which they had from the Papists, and would fain impose on us, remembering that God's command discharges all

inventions of men in his worship; and our covenants, particularly the national covenant, whereby we are most expressly bound against them*.

I shall shut up all with laying before you, in a few words, the reasons annexed to this command.

1. God's sovereignty over us, I the Lord. So he has the sole power and authority to appoint the laws and ordinances by which we must be governed in his worship and service; and for others to take it upon them, is an invading of his sovereignty, which we must by no means own, Jer. 7:31.

2. His propriety in us, Thy God. Therefore we must not go a-whoring after our own or others' inventions, which alienate the heart from God, but must keep ourselves undefiled with these things; as a chaste wife holding by her husband, who will neither be a whore nor behave like one, Hos. 9:1. Because he is our God (I mean), we must neither be idolaters nor superstitions, symbolizing with idolaters.

3. The zeal he hath to his own worship, I—a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, &c. Zeal or jealousy is an affection of a husband, whereby he can endure no partner in his wife's love, but is highly incensed against it, if any such thing there be. So the Lord is specially displeased with all false worship, as spiritual whoredom, and has such a peculiar regard to the matter of his worship, that it is a most dangerous thing to make a wrong step in it, Lev. 10:1, 2. This zeal appears, (1.) In his accounting the breakers of this command haters of him, though idolaters and superstitious persons pretend highly to love and honour him, and threatening to punish them to the third and fourth generation, because so long men may live, and see themselves punished in their children. Not that God properly punishes one for another's sin; but that from the parent's sin he often takes occasion to punish children for their own sins, and such their parents' sins oft-times are by imitation, or some way approving of them. (2.) In his accounting the

observers of this command such as love him, and promising mercy unto them to many generations, even thousands of theirs after them.

This part of the subject was delivered Feb. 21. and the discourse here referred to was preached on occasion of a congregation fast, on the 17th, 1714. being the last year of Queen Anne's reign. It is well known that plots were then carrying on by Papists, Jacobites, and malignants, not without countenance from the then Tory ministry, to bring a Popish Pretender to the throne, on the demise of that much-abused Princess, in the place of the late King George 1. upon whom the crown had been entailed by act of Parliament, as the nearest Protestant heir; that great numbers of trafficking priests and Jesuits flocked into this kingdom; that Popish meetings were held more openly than formerly; that Presbyterian ministers were insulted in several places, and threatenings of vengeance uttered to be inflicted on firm and staunch Protestants. At this dangerous season, Mr. BOSTON, with that freedom and boldness that became a true patriot and an ambassador of the King of kings, was not silent, but faithfully testified against the abominations and cruelties of Papists, and the madness and extravagance of Jacobites and malignants, in the aforementioned discourse; and others preached in those perilous times.

As the discourse referred to was seasonable at that time, so it appears to be equally so at this day, when Popery is evidently on the increase in many places of this kingdom, Edinburgh not excepted, wherein there are said to be three numerous Popish meetings, and endeavours are used, by writings and speeches, to represent Popery in a light quite different from what it really is, thereby to beguile unwary and unstable souls; and not only Papists, but many infatuated and pretended Protestants, not Episcopalians only, but some who pretend to be Presbyterians, are as hearty and warm in the cause of a Popish pretender, as they were in any former period, and who, if their power were equal to their wishes and designs, would soon involve the nation in blood, and all the horrors of a civil war. These considerations have determined the preparer of this work for the Press to give the discourse entire, as it may be useful, through the

divine blessing, for preserving people from the abominations of Popery, and the snares of Jacobites and malignants, those declared enemies to the religion and laws of their country, who, alas! are still very numerous amongst us, notwithstanding the Lord has signally testified his displeasure, of their unhappy cause, on two former occasions, which will be ever remembered with gratitude by all true Protestants, and hearty friends to the illustrious house of Hanover, which God, in mercy to these kingdoms, has raised and maintained on the throne, and made the guardians of our religion, laws, and liberties. And it will be the hearty prayer of all who fear God, and have a just sense of the invaluable liberties we enjoy under our happy constitution, O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude of the wicked, particularly the Antichristian beast, and his tool, a Popish Pretender and his abettors.

THE CHURCH'S PRAYER AGAINST THE ANTICHRISTIAN BEAST, AND HER OTHER ENEMIES, EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED

[A sermon preached on a congregation fast-day at Ettrick, February 17, 1714.]

PSAL. 74:19.—O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude of the wicked.

THIS text represents to us the case of Britian and Ireland at this day (which like Rebekah have two parties struggling within them,) and thereupon an application made to the Lord about it. In the words consider,

1. The struggling parties; these are Zion and Babylon; which never could, and never will agree. The Chaldean Babylon and the Jewish Zion are the parties here immediately pointed at: for it is plain, that this psalm was composed on the lamentable occasion of the Babylonians over-running Judea, and destroying Jerusalem and the

temple. The Christian Zion and the Antichristian Babylon are the parties now on the field, the former being both gone; and so the text may be, without stretching, applied to them. The one party is,

(1.) The turtle; i. e. the church. She is compared to the turtle-dove for her fidelity to God. The turtle is a creature of admired chastity, has but one mate, and cleaves closely to that, and will take no other. So the true church of God preserves her chastity, worshipping none but the true God. But it is a bird that often becomes a prey, as being harmless and weak. Only it is pleaded on her behalf, that she is God's turtle. On the other hand is,

(2.) The multitude. This is the Babylonians, ver. 7. An idolatrous cruel people, who of old were so heavy on the church of God. But among the multitude were others, nearer neighbours to the Jews, particularly the Edomites, who, joining with the Babylonian army, were like firebrands among them, to spur them on to do mischief, Obed. 11. Psal. 137:7. This is the case of this church with Papists, the brats of Babylon, with whom join our malignants; not considering, that after they have helped Babylon to destroy us, they will fall on them next: as Edom was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar sometime after the destruction of Jerusalem.

The word rendered multitude, in Hebrew signifies the wild beast, that lives upon other beasts; such as lions, wolves, &c; and so it may be read. And so it points at two qualities of Babylonian enemies. (1.) Their idolatry, being designed a wild beast, in opposition to the chaste turtle. Such are our new, as the old Babylonians were. They are no more the spouse of Christ, but the great whore, that is mad on idols, and multitudes of them; and cannot be at ease with those that will not drink of the wine of their fornication. (2.) Their horrid cruelty; for having divested God of his divine glory, and given it to others, and are divested themselves of humanity, and rage like wild beasts, when they can get their prey, devouring their fellow-creatures.

2. The party holding the balance betwixt the struggling parties; that is, God himself, to whom application is here made. Babylon has not all at will; Zion's God has the balance of power in his own hand, and can cast the scales what way he pleaseth, and give up or preserve the turtle as he sees meet.

3. The address made to the great Arbitrator on the turtle's behalf, which is our work this day, O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the wild beast. Do not give up the turtle; she will find no mercy from the multitude, the wild beast. They are not content with the mischief they have done to the turtle; nothing less will satisfy them than her life, her soul. The wild beast is gaping for her, not to pluck off her feathers, and send her away wounded, but to swallow her up quite, to destroy her root and branch; for behold the plot, ver. 8, Let us destroy them together. But, Lord, do not give her up to them. It is a most fervent address, intimated by two words in one in Hebrew. We may take up the import of the whole in four points.

I. The church may be in hazard of falling a prey to her enemies, as a poor turtle to be swallowed up by a devouring beast. The church's lot has been in all ages like Paul's to "fight with wild beasts;" and she may well say, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side; if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us," Psal. 124:1, 2, 3. God's enemies, seeing they are not good men, the scripture accounts them beasts. Christ was attacked by bulls and lions, Psal. 22:12, 13; for when men turn persecutors, they set up themselves against the Deity, and withal lay aside all humanity. There are five beasts which God's turtle has been specially in hazard to be swallowed up by.

1. The Egyptian beast, 'the great dragon,' Ezek. 29:3. This was a cruel beast, that made the Lord's people groan long under the greatest bondage. A bloody beast; see the bloody edict, Exod. 1:16. 'When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women,' said Pharaoh to the midwives, 'and set them upon the stools; if it be a son then ye shall

kill him.' It had near swallowed them up, Exod. 15:9. 'The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them, I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.' See how the turtle groans to the Lord against this beast, Psal. 68:30. 'Rebuke the company of spearmen,' Heb. 'the beast of the reeds.' And the people of God comfort themselves under their danger in the text, by the end of the Egytian beast, Psal. 74:13, 14. 'Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragon in the waters. Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meet to the people inhabiting the wilderness.'

2. The Babylonian beast, the lion, Dan. 7:4. Jer. 49:19. Dreadful was the havock this beast made on them; it burnt the temple and the synagogues, filled the land with blood, spared neither men, women, nor children. See the whole book of Lamentations. And the text lets you see how they were well nigh being swallowed up by him. Yet God broke out the teeth of that fierce lion.

3. The Persian beast, the bear, a bloody beast, Dan. 7:5. This, though it lay quiet for a while, yet hindered the building of the temple and the city a long time, and kept the church sorely under. But under this beast a bloody massacre was set on foot, Esth. 3.

The conspirators have their frequent meetings, ver. 7 the court is friendly to them, and the bloody day is set, ver. 12, 13 and all because Mordecai would not bow to Haman an Amalekite, one of those against whom the Lord had sworn he would have war for ever. How near was the church then to be swallowed up? but God broke the plot, and ruined that beast too.

4. The Grecian beast, the leopard, Dan. 7:6. This beast had almost swallowed up the church under Antiochus Epiphanes, who raised a most dreadful persecution against the Jews, polluted the temple, forbade the public worship of God, and set up in the temple the image of heathen Jupiter, and cruelly murdered many that would not comply with idolatry, Dan 11:31–34. Yet they survived that beast.

5. The Roman beast, which is nameless, Dan. 7:7. The scripture speaks of two Roman beasts, that were both heavy to the church.

1st, The great red dragon, Rev. 12:3; that is the Roman empire, headed by the Pagan emperors, whom the devil stirred up to persecute the church for the first three hundred years. Horrible was the havock of Christians made under ten persecuting Pagan emperors. So that it is reckoned there were as many Christians slain under them, as that, if ye would suppose them at this butchering work for one year, there would be five thousand martyrs for every day of that year.

2dly, The beast with the name of blasphemy, Rev. 13:1; that is, the Roman Christian, or rather Antichristian Empire, headed by the Pope, the Popish kingdom, whereof the Pope is the head. All the rest are gone. This is the only remaining beast that is threatening, at this day, the swallowing up of the church in these lands. But this beast, the Antichristian kingdom, is the common sink of all the evil qualities of the other beasts, Rev. 13:2 and has outdone them all. So that eight hundred thousand are reckoned to have lost their lives in thirty years under this beast, which has lasted many hundreds of years. Yet multitudes in Britain and Ireland at this day are doing what they can to run us into the paw of this bear, the mouth of this lion and dragon. But let us cry, O deliver not thy turtle-dove unto this beast. We may see that we are in fearful danger of it. The symptoms of it are,

(1.) The frightful appearance that Papists and Popery are making now in these lands. It is known that great numbers of Papists are come, and are still coming from abroad: that they are drawing together in an unusual manner; that they are arming themselves, no doubt for some bloody design. The locusts spoke of, Rev. 9:3 are swarming in the land, well known in the northern parts; and no doubt through all corners they are trafficking though in disguise. They have dreadful success, perverting many, and mass is said publicly and avowedly in several parts. So that these twenty-five

years, since King James was on the throne, they have never so lifted up their heads as now.

(2.) The just fears there are of the Pretender's getting into the throne, a Papist bred up in the maxims of Popery and French government, from whom nothing can be more expected than the ruin of the Protestant religion. To this Papists and malignant Jacobites are bending their united endeavours, and have so far ripened their accursed project! that they are very confident of success.

(3.) The formidable power of France, from whence our enemies have their great encouragement. That cruel tyrant is by the late peace now at more leisure to enslave us, and landing an army for setting the Pretender on the throne, to be a tool, (in his hand) to ruin our liberties and our holy religion, as he has done at home with his own.

(4.) Many vile men are exalted to power and trust, enemies to the Protestant succession, keen for the Popish Pretender, though they have abjured him, for no greater end than that they might thereby get into places to do him service, and further his interest. What wonder then that the wicked walk on every side, and that God's turtle be in hazard of being swallowed up by the Antichristian beast?

II. God may justly give up a sinful church and a sinful people into the power of the multitude of this beast. They have nothing to plead but free mercy, why they should not be so given up O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the wild beast. What has Britian and Ireland, what has Scotland to plead this day, why they should not be delivered into the power of the wild beast that is gaping to suck their blood, and devour us? We may see we deserve it, if we consider,

1. The sins of the late times. These nations were some time in a thriving condition, having proclaimed war against the beast, and married themselves to the Lord in a solemn covenant for reformation, to cast off and out all Antichristian corruption in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, life and manners, to

banish the false prophet and the unclean spirit out of them. But behold, by a heaven-daring wickedness, the same generation in the three kingdoms publicly renounce and break that covenant, and for the greater solemnity it is burnt, and of late the ashes of it were gathered by authority, and thrown into the river of the sinful union between Scotland and England. Is it any wonder that God is now rising up to pursue for the penalty, according to that threatening Lev. 26:25. "I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant?" This is the head of God's controversy with the nations; this was the inlet to other abominations: for that being done, the nations run back to Antichrist again. Scotland takes back the horns of the beast. England and Ireland the horns and the attire of the whore. Profaneness breaks in like a flood; the faithful are persecuted, oppressed, and murdered; and most part of all ranks make fearful apostasy and defection from the ways of truth.

2. The sins of the present times. We have entered ourselves heirs to the guilt of former times, by not mourning over the same by a woful slackness in not pursuing reformation, and heartlessness and faintness in the cause of God. We have gone far to betray the covenanted work of reformation; and enemies want not ground to say, that they have bought the truth of many in the generation, who are not yet convinced they have sold it. If we look to,

(1.) A great man in our land, we will see inordinarily monstrous wickedness, especially, though not only among the nobility and gentry. Atheism and Deism, I believe have made greater advances in our day, than ever they did since the Christian religion was known in the world. All revealed religion and the scriptures are ridiculed; and they that have any sense of religion on their spirits, are reckoned to have been foundered in their education. Hence loose reins are given to all manner of profaneness and debauchery. Whoredom and adultery, and filthiness not to be named, have made inordinary advances, especially since the union was set on foot; for having drank of the cup of English filthiness, they have been made mad. If for

these things God have not a sacrifice of the best blood in Scotland and England, it will be strange.

(2.) To the body of the land, we will find them either profane drunkards, swearers, Sabbath-breakers, dishonest, or ignorant, carnal worldlings, that mind nothing but the world, living in a woful neglect of all religion, from whose heart their own case and that of the church lies far off, slighting the precious offers of Christ, and not bettered by all the means of grace which they have been long living under.

(3.) To professors, we will see the provocation of sons and daughters increased to heaven. How have we left our first love? where is the tenderness that we sometimes have seen? A general deadness, formality, and lukewarmness has seized them. Carnality and worldly mindedness has eaten out the life of religion. A light, vain and frothy spirit has got in among them, pride and self-conceit prevail, ordinances are slighted, sermons and sacraments treated as things common and unclean, and a fiery divisive spirit, more frightened at the sins of others than their own, has dishonoured God and broken us.

(4.) Look where we will, guilt stares us in the face. We have all sinned. God has a controversy with magistrates, ministers, and people; for we have all gone back from the Lord, been unthankful for, and have miserably misimproved our privileges, and opportunities of advancing the kingdom of Christ within us and without us. Let us then conclude, that God may justly deliver us up unto the multitude, the Antichristian beast.

III. If God give up his turtle unto the wild beast, the multitude of her enemies, it will be a dreadful upgiving. When God let his people fall into the hands of the old Babylonian beast, terrible was their case. And now the Antichristian beast, to which the malignant party lend a helping hand, is going to devour us; and if God give us up into their hand, it will be a dreadful upgiving. A Popish Pretender mounting

the throne, a French army in our country, together with an army of British Papists and malignants, must needs be a thought of horror to us. It will be a dreadful upgiving. For then,

1. Religion is ruined. The Babylonian beast will make sad work of our holy religion, as Psal. 72:4–8. King James was not well warm on the throne, till by his absolute power free liberty was given to Popish idolatry through the nations. But what can we expect in the case before us, but the overturning at first dash all that we have had by the Revolution, yea, and the extirpation of northern heresy, as they call it; We must in that case lay our account with the silencing of ministers, silent Sabbaths, and closed church-doors, till they be opened again for the mass, or at least for the English service which yet will be but an expedient for a time to prepare us for Popery.

2. Liberty and property is ruined. We must lay our account with French government. Our all must be at the disposal of our arbitrary prince, whose will must be our law, to use us, and what is ours, according to his pleasure. We must no longer look for the liberty of free-born subjects, but must be content to be slaves: and our laws may be burnt, for all law then must be locked up in the breast of the prince. And the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, that enslaving notion, must be quietly learned.

3. Ourselves and our families are ruined in our souls or bodies, or both. We must lay our account to feel the teeth of the Babylonian beast, to swim in blood to glut the scarlet coloured whore, already drunk with the blood of the saints. The Papists are a bloody generation, and we may expect to see our land filled with blood and desolation, if the Lord deliver us into the hand of the wild beast. Let us look about us, and take notice of their cruelties exercised upon the churches of Christ, to awaken us to a sense of our danger from that bloody generation.

In the valley of Piedmont they raised a most barbarous persecution against the church, where simple death would have been a great

kindness. But some were flayed alive, and some were buried alive; the mouths of some were filled with gun-powder, and then fired. They beat out the brains of some, then fried and eat them. They ript up women, fixed them on spits, roasted them, and ate their breasts. Maids were carried by the soldiers with spits stuck up through them. Infants were taken out of their cradles, and torn to pieces. I am not speaking, my brethren, of devils, but of Papists.

In Calabria they drave them out of their houses to the woods and mountains. The aged and children that could not flee, they murdered by the way, pursuing the rest like wild beasts. Those that could recover the mountains, being on the top of rocks, besought their enemies to let them but out of the country, and they would leave them their towns and estates. But the barbarian Papists would not hearken, but still cried, Kill, kill. Eighty had their throats cut, and then they were quartered, and set upon stakes all along the way for he space of thirty miles.

In the valley of Loyse all the inhabitants, being about thirty thousand, fled, upon the approach of the Papists, to the clifts and caves of the rocks and mountains, whether their enemies pursued them, and set on fire great quantities of wood at the mouth of the caves; some were forced to leap out, and were broken to pieces falling over the precipice; the rest were stifled, among whom were four hundred infants

In the massacre of Ireland there perished above 150,000, some say 154,000 Protestants in a few months, men, women, and children. Some they buried alive, with their heads above the ground. Others they ript up, tied the end of their guts to trees, and forced them round about till their guts were so drawn out of their bodies. Infants were held up on their swords and daggers, to sprawl there. Children were forced to murder their parents, women to hang their own husbands, and mothers to drown their own children; and when they had so far satisfied the bloody beasts, they were murdered

themselves. The posterity of these murderers still subsist, and may be got over, if an occasion offer here.

But if ye will believe our Jacobites, the French are a more civil sort of Papists. O horrible civility! Are not the galleys, a civil sort of business, the breaking on the wheel, and the dragooning, all used by this present tyrant? Can we reflect without horror on their blowing up men and women with bellows till they be ready to burst, pulling off the nails of fingers and toes, sticking them with pins from head to foot, &c. beating twelve drums about the beds of the sick, &c. till they should change their religion? It is not many years since a company of these poor people being met in a barn, the barn was beset by soldiers, and set on fire; and when any put out a hand to escape, the soldiers were ready to cut it off, till they were consumed.

In the Netherlands 18,000 were dispatched. The laws of the inquisition there were, that if they recanted, women were to be buried alive, and men killed with the sword. If they would not recant, they were to be burnt. So that denying the faith will not always do with them. So in Ireland they murdered them after they had got them to abjure.

What should I speak of their cruelties? Death is terrible: but a simple death will not satisfy them, but barbarous cruelty, yea, and villianies worse than death, as binding husbands and fathers to bed posts till they abused their wives and daughters before them, which was done in the dragooning under this present tyrant in France, and in the massacre in Ireland. Now upon all this let me notice a fourfold infatuation.

1. Are not those infatuated, who being Protestants are for bringing a Popish Pretender to the throne, or are indifferent about it? Will the laws bind him, and secure us? But had not the Protestants in France such a security, when thirty thousand of them were massacred in thirty days; and the Protestants in Ireland too. Will we bind him with terms? Had not the Suffolk men Queen Mary's promise ere she came

to the throne? Had not the church of Scotland King Charles II. by solemn oath of the covenant? Will we flatter ourselves with hopes of his becoming Protestant? Is it not known that a little before his pretended father came to the crown, some were put to trouble for saying he was a Papist? Look to the flames of martyrs in England in Queen Mary's days, in whose reign, and her father's eight thousand were put to death. Let us call to mind the cruelty of our own Queen Mary, and with what satisfaction she beheld from the castle of Edinburgh the dead bodies of her Protestant subjects laid out by the French on the walls of Leith.

2. Is not that aversion to the Hanover succession an infatuation, while no other way under heaven appears for our preservation, and that of the Protestant religion? They will tell you, What is Hanover better than a Papist? and what is the difference betwixt consubstantiation and transubstantiation? Papists and Jacobites have spread this. But Protestants ought to honour that family, seeing it was but the present Duchessdowager's father and mother that lost the kingdom of Bohemia for the Protestant religion, with whose loss of that kingdom the Protestant religion was lost there, and for them many a prayer was put up by the church of Scotland in our forefathers' days. And should we grudge God's giving that family a kingdom, that lost one for his cause? As for the difference betwixt consubstantiation and transubstantiation, there is one, that the Lutherans do not worship the sacrament. And seeing it was an error in which the Lord left Luther himself, the great instrument of the Reformation, it becomes men to be more modest, than to reckon one no better than a Papist on that head.

3. Are not our present divisions an infatuation? Must Presbyterians be worrying one another, while the common enemy is at our doors, that will make no difference betwixt us? Must we be breaking with one another, while we are in such hazard to be all broken together? Are we not all together weak enough for our enemies! Must one party stand at a side till they have devoured another? Herod and Pontius Pilate are become friends. The mass and the English service are

contributing joint endeavours to ruin the church of Scotland. Papists and malignants agree together against us; and some of them will tell you, that they would rather be Papists than Presbyterians. Some of them acknowledge the church of Rome a true church, but not the church of Scotland. They will have us to be no ministers, because we want Episcopal ordination, and you no Christians, because ye are unbaptised in their account, as not being baptised by ministers having such ordination. And yet we must be breaking more and more among ourselves? Learn from the beasts in the ark to lay by your antipathies. They were but in hazard of drowning in a sea of water, but we in a sea of blood. I am not bidding you quit or deny any truth for peace; only do not think that it will absolve you from what is required in the sixth commandment, that ye cannot get others racked your length, who agree with you in the main.

4. Is not our present security an infatuation? Is it not time now for sleepers to awake? Is it not time now to be stirring ourselves in our several stations for the preservation of religion, and the getting it felt in power in our own hearts? For a bare profession will expose you.

IV. Unless the Lord give up his turtle to the multitude, all their power and force shall not be able to hurt her. However we are beset with enemies this day, our God must give us up ere they can reach us. This is comfortable. Therefore let me say,

1. Let us make up our peace with Heaven: for if God be for us, who shall be against us? O that the nations were now so wise as to repent and reform, and renew their covenant with God. We would then have ground to hope, that the Lord would not give them up. But if this cannot be had, be ye so wise, each of you for yourselves, as to lay hold on the covenant and Mediator of peace, repent and reform; and let there be no standing controversy betwixt God and you, come what will.

2. Let us pray much for the church of God. In the year 1588, when the Spanish Armado set off to sink England, to ruin the Protestant

religion in Britain, great was the consternation on the spirits of Protestants then; but there were wrestlers then in Scotland and England; and God armed the winds and waves against them, and made that proud monarch see that his Armado was not invincible. The outpouring of the Spirit of prayer would do more this day against our enemies than all the power of France is able to do for them.

3. Lastly, Let us encourage ourselves in the Lord: prepare for the worst, yet hope that God will plead the cause that is his own. We have a good cause, and a good God to look to, who keeps the balance in his own hand. And we have the sworn enemy of Christ, even Antichrist to oppose; and better die in Christ's cause than live on Antichrist's side; for the day is hasting on, when the Roman beast and its adherents shall get blood to drink for the blood they have shed, Rev. 19:17, 18, 19, 20.

OF THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

EXOD. 20:7.—Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

As the first command respects the object of worship, and the second the means, so this third hath respect to the right manner of worship. In the words there are two things.

1. The command, Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. It is expressed negatively, to strike into men the greater awful reverence of that glorious and great name. Now, as men by their names are known, and distinguished one from another, so by the name of God we are to understand generally, whatsoever it is whereby God makes himself known, which we learn from his word

and works. 'For no man hath seen God at any time,' John 1:18; nor do we know any thing of him, but what he has been so pleased to reveal of himself. So that God being thus revealed unto us, the scope of this command is to bind upon us a holy reverence of him so far as he has revealed himself to us.

To take this name in vain, signifies, (1.) To a lie, or falsely. God is a God of truth; and his name must not be in any ways interposed to falsehood, as they do who father their own lies on him, or call him to witness to a lie in swearing falsely. (2.) In vain; God is great, and we must not use his name in thought, word, or writing, lightly without just cause, rashly without reverence, or unprofitably to no good purpose, God's honour, the good of ourselves or others, and much less contumeliously and wickedly, as in cursing and blaspheming.

The positive part is implied, viz. That we must hallow the name of God, treat it holily and reverently, Isa. 8:13 interposing it only to truth, whereof he is the author, and that upon his own call, with reverence, for his honour, and the good of ourselves and others.

2. The reason annexed to this command. For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Where observe,

(1.) The evil threatened against the breakers of this command. The Lord will not hold them guiltless. Two things are remarkable here. [1.] In that it is said, The Lord will not hold them guiltless, it implies, that profaners of God's name many times hold themselves guiltless. They abuse God's name, and then wipe their mouths, and say they have not sinned. Men hold them guiltless, they escape punishment from men; but while both themselves and others let the plea sleep, God will awaken it, and take the quarrel into his own hand. [2.] In that it is said, The Lord will not hold them guiltless, more is meant than is expressed, viz. that God will severely punish the profaning of his name. The less they think of it, God will think the more of it, and men shall find peculiar severe resentments of this sin from a highly

provoked God. They will find, that though it lies far from their hearts, yet it touches a holy God near.

(2.) How particular the threatening is, Hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. The sin is repeated in the threatening, to shew the heinousness of it, how ill God takes it to have his name taken in vain. And though it be a common sin, yet none shall be hid or escape among the multitude of criminals, but God will bring out this man and that man, even every man that is a profaner of his name, and judge him as particularly, and punish him as severely, as if there were but one man in the fault. And though some by their being set above others in the world, think they may take a latitude in this sin, yet, be the man who he will, him will God punish for it: were he the greatest on earth, he shall know that his tongue is not his own, but that JEHOVAH is Lord over him.

(3.) How peremptory the threatening is: it is not simply said, God will punish him that taketh his name in vain, but God will NOT hold him guiltless. Let him not think to escape, God will not quit his honour so. His glory engages him to resent the dishonour done to his name, and the abuser of it shall not go free. If God's name be profaned by him, it shall be glorified upon him one way or other.

In discoursing further from this subject, I shall shew,

I. What is required in this command.

II. What is forbidden in it.

III. The reason annexed to it.

IV. Make some improvement.

I am to shew what is required in the third command. It 'requires the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, words, and works.'

And here I shall shew,

1. What is the name of God by which he makes himself known, which is to be hallowed by us.
2. What is our duty with respect to this glorious name, in all the parts thereof.

First, I shall shew what is the name of God by which he makes himself known, which is to be hallowed by us. Under this are comprehended.

1. The particular names that God takes to himself in his word, as Jehovah, Lord, God, I am, &c. Exod. 6:3. And whereas he is one God in three persons, we take in here the names of all the three, the Father, the Son, who is also called Jesus Christ, Immanuel, and the Holy Ghost.

2. The titles of God. For as great men have titles of honour, whereby they are distinguished from others, so God has taken certain titles to himself, as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Preserver of Men, Hearer of Prayer, &c. So the three persons in the Trinity have titles. The Father is called the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c. the Son King of kings, Lord of lords, Head of the Church, &c. and the Spirit, the Comforter, Sanctifier, &c.

3. The attributes of God, that is, his perfections and properties, whereby he is distinguished from all the creatures; such as, his eternity, unchangeableness, infinity, omniscience, &c. in a word, all the glorious properties of the divine nature common to all the three persons. Each of these is as it were a letter of his name, Exod. 33:19. 'I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee.' Chap. 34:6, 7. 'The Lord—proclaimed, 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, and that will by no means clear the guilty.' And happy they that can believingly read this name.

4. The ordinances of God. These are his name by which he is known in the world, Micah 4:5 with Luke 1:6. Such are prayer, praise, the sacraments, &c; oaths, for swearing by the name of God when we are duly called thereto, is a part of religious worship, and a very solemn and awful ordinance of God, Deut. 10:20. So are lots an ordinance of God, wherein the decision of any thing is committed to Divine Providence, and thereby God makes his will known, Prov. 16:33. Acts 1:24, 26.

5. His word, which we have in the holy scriptures, Psal. 138:2. This is to be read by us, preached and heard, that we may thereby know our God; for therein is his name unfolded, both in the law and in the gospel, which are the two parts thereof.

6. Lastly, His works. By these is he known, viz. his works of creation, Psal. 19:1; and of providence, whether of mercy, Acts 14:17; or of judgment, Psal. 9:19.

Secondly, I come now to shew what is our duty with respect to this glorious name in all the parts thereof. We may take it up in these two things.

1. We are to use it in all the parts thereof as we are called. God has laid it before us for our use, and we ought to take it up. This is plainly implied in the command, not to take it in vain: for (observe) there is a great difference betwixt the orders Heaven gives concerning the name of other gods, and the name of the true God, Exod. 23:13. 'Make no mention of the names of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth;' compared with this command, Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. And indeed when God gives us his names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works, if we use them not we take them in vain, Cor. 6:1. Now, there are three ways how we may be said to use this name.

1st, In thought, whether by simple conceiving it, and the several parts of it, or by settled meditation upon it. Thus we are to take up the

name of God into our minds, thinking and meditating upon his names, titles, attributes, &c. And thus that question, 'What is his name,' Prov. 30:4 may be our continual study, our every day's lesson; and it will serve us to learn as long as we are in the world; and no wonder, for it is what the saints in heaven are learning, and will learn through eternity. This is our duty, and would be a most profitable study, being a great part of the life of faith, whereby the soul feeds on God himself.

2dly, In words, whether by speaking of it, or writing of it. And thus we are to take it up in our lips and pens. The first is the duty of all; the second of some only, whom God calls and has fitted thereunto, as he did the prophets, apostles, and others, who by their writings have been useful to particular persons, or to the church of God. To speak of God is the great end of speech that is given to man, made to be the mouth of the creation; and therefore our tongue is called our glory, by which we ought to contribute to the displaying of the glory of God, in his names, titles, &c.

3dly, In deeds; and so we are to take up his holy name in our practice, making conscience of the practice of the duties enjoined in God's word and ordinances, praying, reading, hearing, communicating, swearing by his name, when in a lawful oath duty called thereto, &c. Thus a practical profession of religion, as well as a verbal profession, is a duty of this command. And,

(1.) A verbal profession is necessary at some times; that is, when we are by the providence of God called thereunto, to give a testimony unto the truth, 1 Pet. 3:15. For then it is asked, as it were, By what name are we called? and then we must not be ashamed of our Father, before men, but meekly though boldly declare it even in words, Rom. 10:10; and so take up his name before the world; owning his names, incommunicable titles, attributes, ordinances, &c.

(2.) A real or practical profession is necessary at all times, Rev. 14:1 having our Father's name written on our foreheads; that is, we must

not only be, but give out ourselves in our way and carriage to be the servants of God, following the duties of religion, whereby we are distinguished from the world that have no profession; and so professing his name in the several parts thereof.

Three things make this threefold use of the name of God necessary.

[1.] The glory of God, 1 Cor. 10:31. Lev. 10:3; for by his name he has made his glory shine; but if we use it not, we do what in us lies to put that glory under a bushel. Whereas for his honour we should use it in all the parts thereof.

[2.] Our own good, Jer. 32:39. The name of God is good at all times, but especially in a time of trouble, Prov. 18:10. 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.' Every part of his name is a secret chamber, where a believer may feed, feast, and be safe in the worst of times. His names and titles are cordials to a fainting soul; his attributes are a magazine of comfort, and a fountain of fulness for all wants; his ordinances are breasts of consolations; his word is a good heritage; and his works are full of wonder, declaring what a great and good God he is.

[3.] The good of others. It is a great kindness to a blinded world to take up this name in our lips and lives. It is like the pouring out of ointment, and breaking of spices, that they may find the fragrant smell, and desire to be partakers, John 4. We should commend his names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works to others. It is glory to God, good for us, and may do good to others. It was Christ's work, John 17:26 and was comfortable to him when going out of the world, and would be so to us at that hour.

Secondly, We are to use this name in all the parts of it holily and reverently, whatever way we use the same, whether in thought, word, or deed. This is very extensive; but there are three things especially aimed at in the holy and reverend use of God's name.

1. The using of it in faith. If we use not his names, titles, &c. in faith, we take them in vain, Heb. 11:6. Rom. 14 ult. If we believe not his being, what his names and titles import, our giving them to him is but hypocritical compliment. Do we call him Hearer of prayer? let us be sure of the faith of it, or we do but mock God. If we believe not his word, as it will not please him, so it will not profit us, Heb. 4:2. Unbelief makes us take his name in vain.

2. In fear. To use the name of God without fear and reverence of his majesty, is to abuse it, Deut. 28:58. His names and titles are dreadful, though sweet I may say of them as of the rings, they are so high that they are dreadful, Ezek. 1:18. His attributes are so: for even that love, mercy, and grace towards sinners, comes not but through the wounds made in the side of the Mediator by the sword of justice. His ordinances need nothing from men to make them awful; in their greatest simplicity they have an impression of divine authority on them, and God's special presence in them, sufficient to awe the hearts of them that are not blinded. His word has a peculiar majesty in it; and the meanest of his works bear the impression of a divine hand. And shall we use them without fear?

3. In singleness, to a right end; not for no end, a carnal selfish end, far less a wicked end; but for the honour of God, the good of ourselves and others. It is a precious treasure opened unto sinners for their eternal welfare, not to be lavished out to no good purpose, but for the highest and best ends. So that these, things must be reserved as sacred, and not meddled with but in matters of highest importance. More particularly,

1st, We must holily and reverently use his names and titles, when we think, speak, or any way handle them, with faith, fear, and singleness, having a holy dread and awe of his majesty on our spirits, as believing him to be what he calls himself, Jer. 5:22 and looking on him as his name is high above all.

2dly, We must holily and reverently use his attributes, thinking and speaking of them in a reverent and spiritual manner, and making such use of them for our own particular case, and the case of others, as the revealing of them is designed for, otherwise we use them in vain, Psal. 130:4. 2 Cor. 5:11.

3dly. We must holily and reverently use his ordinances going about them in the right manner; praying in the spirit, singing with grace in the heart, making melody unto the Lord; preaching or hearing in faith, communicating worthily with grace and grace in exercise, &c. In a word, it requires all to be done in the ordinances after the right manner. Particularly,

(1.) We must use God's name holily and reverently in an oath. When the oath being lawful, and we are called to it by authority, we 'swear in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness.' Jer. 4:2.

(1.) In truth; which implies, (1.) That the thing be truth in itself which we swear to, otherwise we call God to witness to a lie. (2.) That we be persuaded in our consciences that it is truth. So that here is required an agreement of our words with the truth of the thing sworn, and an agreement of our minds with our words, Psal. 15:2. (3.) That it be without fraud or deceit, whereby all equivocations or mental reservations are to be far from oaths, as we would not profane that sacred name; and the intent of the imposer is to be regarded.

(2.) In judgment; which implies, (1.) That we must understand the thing we swear, that it be not dubious and perplexed, swearing we know not what. (2.) That we understand the nature of an oath, viz. that we thereby solemnly call God to witness to the truth of what we assert or promise, and to judge us according to the truth or falsehood of what we swear. And therefore, (3.) That it be gone about with due fear and reverence of God on our spirit, as knowing it is God we have to do with. Hence the righteous man is represented as one that feareth an oath.

(3.) In righteousness; which implies, (1.) That the thing we swear be lawful and just; for an oath is abused when it is made a bond of iniquity; and so that the thing be possible, and in our power. (2.) That it be for good ends, viz. that God be glorified, Josh. 7:19; our neighbour satisfied, and controversy ended, Heb. 6:16; our own innocency cleared, Exod. 22:11, &c. (3.) That we mind well and firmly resolve to perform it.

(2.) In lots God's name is holily and reverently used, when,

(1.) They are used in a matter of weight; for the end of them is the same with that of an oath, Prov. 18:18. And the nature of them is not unlike, being an appeal to God's decision, Prov. 16:33. And so we find they are weighty cases in scripture wherein they are used, as in the cases of Jonah and Matthias.

(2.) When they are necessary, and the matter cannot otherwise be decided without great inconveniences, as in the above cases. And reason teaches, that this being God's decision, men ought not without great necessity to go off the ordinary road.

(3.) When men eye God in the lot, look to him for the decision with calling on his name, Jonah 1. Acts 1.

(4.) When the matter is singly given up to God, and no fraud or trick is used to cast the matter to one side rather than another; for that is to put the decision first in God's hand, and then to take it out again, which is a mocking of God.

(5.) Lastly, When with due reverence that is received which falls by the lot, as coming from the determination of God.

Were these things duly considered, I think men would not make such use of lotting, by casting cavils, drawing cuts, &c. but would satisfy themselves otherwise many times.

4thly, We must holily and reverently use the word, thinking of, speaking, and hearing it with godly fear, as the word of God, and that we may obey it.

5thly, and lastly, We must holily and reverently use his works, thinking of, speaking of, and using them to the honour of God, our own and others' welfare, adoring the Author, and giving him the praise of all.

To shut up all, we do thus use the name of God, by having a conversation suitable to that great and glorious name we profess to honour, Phil. 1:27. For we take his name in vain when our practice thwarts our profession; for that makes the name of God to be blasphemed, Rom. 2:24.

II. I proceed to shew what is forbidden in the third commandment. It 'forbids all profaning or abusing of any thing whereby God makes himself known.

This command is broken two ways.

1. By not using the name of God as is required, Mal. 2:2. So as many duties as are required, so many sins there are in omitting these duties. Hence this command is broken by our not hallowing and glorifying God's name, by not taking up the name of God into our minds, lips, and lives. We contract guilt against this command by not thinking and meditating on God's titles, attributes, &c. not speaking of them for the glory of God, our own and the good of others; not writing of it when men are gifted for it, and have a real call to do it. So also by not making a profession of religion; a real profession at all times; a verbal profession when men are by providence called thereto. Not using God's ordinances. Particularly it is a sin against this command, to refuse an oath touching what is good and just, when duty called thereunto. For in all these cases there is a neglect of the duty of glorifying God's name enjoined in this command.

2. By profaning or abusing of the name of God; that is, any thing whereby God makes himself known. This is the great sin forbidden in this command; a bitter root that spreads itself out with many branches. In speaking to it, I shall shew,

1. The more plain and palpable profanations of that holy name forbidden in this command.

2. Other ways how the Lord's name is abused and taken in vain.

First, I am to shew the more plain and palpable profanations of that holy name forbidden in this command. The name of God is plainly and palpably abused,

1. When it is used ignorantly, as it was by the Athenians, whom the apostle Paul charges with worshipping God ignorantly, Acts 18:23. And of this all those that are ignorant of God, Christ, and the way of salvation, cannot but be guilty, when they do at all use that holy name: for as no man can work right in the dark, so the darkness of ignorance on the soul utterly unfits it to glorify the name of God. And in what measure soever that culpable ignorance lies on us, so far are we guilty in that case. How is the name of God abused by ignorant persons, while they mention the name of they know not whom, and speak of him they know not what? They will call God their God, who know not the nature of that God, the covenant of grace, or the way how he becomes ours. They will call Christ their sweet Saviour, while they know not who he is, nor are acquainted with his salvation. They will call his Spirit their Sanctifier, who know nothing of his sanctifying operations and influences.

2. When it is used vainly and irreverently, that is, lightly and rashly. There is so little of God in the hearts of many, that his name, that dreadful name, is much in their mouths, without any necessity or reverence in their common talk. The Jews had so great thoughts of the name of Jehovah, that they would not mention it. They permit not their children to mention the name of God till they be seven

years old. If the Mahometans find a piece of paper in the way, they put it in some hole of a wall or so, because the name of God is or may be in it. But, alas! among Christians it is much used in vain and irreverently. The name of God is thus profaned, vainly and irreverently used.

1st. By exclamations in a way of foolish wonder. It is sad to think how that holy name is profaned by men, when, being surprised to see, or hear, something they wonder at, they cry, O God! O Lord! God bless us, save us, guide us, have a care for us! That it is lawful to pray for these things, none doubt. But such as are in earnest for his blessing, guidance, &c. will see them to be matters of so great moment, that, when they are to seek them, they will compose themselves to a praying frame, and lift up their hands with their hearts to the heavens for them, with singleness, fear and faith, in the blood of Christ. But, to use his holy name, to give vent to our foolish passions, is horrible prostitution of it.

2dly, It is used vainly and irreverently in thanksgivings to God, and salutations. How formally and lightly will many say, God be thanked, Blessed be God, when the very shew of their countenance declares they have no grateful sense of God's goodness, nor reverence of him on their spirits? So God speed you, God be with you, are good prayers indeed, but mostly used so formally, that they are but an abusing of that holy name.

3dly, In obsecrations, wherein the name of God is interposed to beseech a person to do or forbear such a thing. They are very good when in matters of weight they are gravely and reverently used, as Rom. 12:1. 'I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.' But to use them in small matters, as many do, entreating for God's sake, or God's love, to do so and so, is but abusing that holy name. Common beggars are very guilty in this way.

4thly, In adjurations, wherein the name of God is interposed to oblige a person to do or forbear something. This is a very solemn piece of business, 2 Tim. 4:1 and may very safely be used by those who have authority in matters of weight; and people's slighting of these solemn charges given by ministers, or other superiors, is very sinful. But it is a sin, (1.) To use these things in light matters, as to bid one do any thing we are little concerned about, in God's name. (2.) And though any person may pray to God against devils, that he would bind them up, yet it is a sin for any who have not the gift of casting out devils, to adjure the devil, or command him in the name of God to go, as the vagabond Jews did, Acts. 19:13, 14.

5thly, In appeals to God. We find the saints using them reverently in matters of weight, as the apostle Paul, 2 Cor. 12:2 but to appeal to God in trifles, is the way to bring down the judgment of God on the appellant. The serious thoughts of God's knowledge may make the best to tremble, and strike all with so much awe of his majesty as not to make a by-word of it.

3. When the name of God is used superstitiously, 1 Sam. 4:3, 4, 5. So, to name the name of God over diseases, or against the devil, as if the very mentioning of that name, without faith in him, would do the business. So is that bowing at the name of Jesus, used by those of the church of England, a superstitious abuse of that holy name.

4. When it is used profanely and wickedly. Under this may be comprehended,

1st, Profane swearing. Swearing is an holy ordinance, appointed by God, a piece of most solemn worship, wherein we invoke God as our witness and judge, which makes common swearing a dreadful sin. It is twofold, both of them abounding in our day.

(1.) Swearing by God and Christ. How do many glory in their horrid oaths, which may make one that has any notion of the greatness of that name to tremble! They have a God to swear by, but not to

worship and pray to. But indeed it is wounding, that there should be others, who will both pray to and profanely swear by that God, Jam. 3:10.

(2.) Swearing by the creatures. The papists, that worship the creatures, no wonder they swear by them too, as by the holy bread in the sacrament, by St. Mary. But what have Protestants to say for swearing by them? Yet how frequent are oaths, by our faith, troth, soul, conscience, &c.? The mincing of these oaths will not make men guiltless; yet, alas! how few are there that want them, Ha'th Faith, Ha'd'yv, Fa'd'ye, Mary? This swearing by creatures is,

[1.] Impious idolatry, giving that worship to the creature which is due to God alone, Deut. 10:20. Swearing is an invoking of the object we swear by, to be witness of the truth of what we affirm or deny, and so to judge and punish us if we swear falsely; and to whom can this belong but to God? Jer. 5:7.

[2.] The dishonour redounds to God, because these things have a relation to God, Matt. 5:34, 37. The soul is his creature, conscience is his depute, truth his image, &c. Hezekiah broke the brazen serpent when the people abused it to idolatry. Take heed God break not that soul of thine on the wheel of his wrath.

As for your minced oaths, I pray you consider, (1.) That they are at least an appearance of evil, 1 Thess. 5:22. (2.) That they are surely idle words, Matth. 12:36. (3.) Are not the most serious Christians conscientious in this? Phil. 4:9. (4.) That they are offensive to the serious godly, Matth. 18:6, 7. (5.) That they must either be oaths, or they have no sense at all.

2dly, Sinful imprecations or cursings, whereby people pray for some evil against themselves or others, whether absolutely, or conditionally. We find the saints conditionally imprecating evil against themselves, as in the case of clearing themselves of what they are wrongously loaded with, Psal. 7:3, 4, 5. And in this we may

imitate them, when in matters of weight we are duly called thereto, behaving therein as in the taking of an oath; for in every oath there is an imprecation. Also there are examples of the saints imprecating a curse against God's incorrigible enemies, out of pure zeal to the glory of God, which they, from the Spirit of prophecy apply to particular persons, Psal. 109:6, &c. But it is a profaning the name of God.

(1.) When people unnecessarily imprecate a curse on themselves or others, conditionally, if they do not so or so, or if it be not truth that they may say, as wishing,—confound them, they may be hanged, or never stir out of the bit, &c. if matters be not so or so, when there is no necessity for it, or edification by it. In that case, the name of God is profaned; and though the name of God be not expressed, it is still abused; for it is God that must be the executor of the sinful wish.

(2.) When people serve their passions against themselves or others, by their curses. Thus people sin in their fits of discontent, wishing evil to themselves, and in their fits of passion and revenge against others, praying, Shame fall, ill chance, &c. This is the product of a bitter spirit, highly dishonourable to God, whose name is prostituted to serve men's hellish passions.

(3.) When people use them to confirm a lie, or to bind them to sin. Thus people are doubly guilty, and dare the vengeance of heaven, cursing themselves if such a thing be true, which yet they know is not true; or binding themselves to do some evil, by a curse.

(4.) Neither is the matter mended by invoking the devil instead of God. Much homage gets the devil from some, who are often found praying to the devil to take themselves or others. So they mention, Foul Fiend, &c. which are only other names of that wicked spirit.

3dly, Perjury is falsehood confirmed with an oath. It is twofold.

(1.) There is perjury opposite to an assertory oath; and that is, either when a man swears a thing to be true which is false, or a thing to be false which is true. It is opposite to swearing in truth, which is

swearing so as a man's mind agree with his words, and his words with the thing. So that a man is not only perjured when he swears against his mind and knowledge, as the false witnesses against Naboth did; but also when he swears against the truth of the thing, though not against his mind, being mistaken; for in both cases God is called to witness to a lie; though indeed the former is far more heinous than the latter. And therefore it is, that no man can lawfully swear what he doubts of; that is to run a dreadful risk.

(2.) There is a perjury opposite to a promissory oath; and that is, either when a man promiseth something upon oath which he has no mind to perform even when he takes the oath; or though he minded to perform it when he took the oath, yet afterwards changes his mind, and does it not, when he both ought and can do it. Only remember, that the breaking of an unlawful oath, so far as it is unlawful, is not perjury. It is a sin indeed to take such an oath; but it is no sin, but duty to break it. And the case is the same in tows, 1 Sam. 25:22, 32, 33. The sin of perjury is dreadful. For,

[1.] It is a most solemn affronting of an omniscient and just God, and is near akin to atheism. It is a calling of God to be witness to a lie; it is a playing with infinite justice, a daring of heaven's vengeance, while men devote their souls to destruction wilfully; because in every oath men invoke God to judge them according to the truth or falsehood of what they swear.

[2.] It is most provoking in the sight of God; a sin which God's anger smokes against in a peculiar manner, Zech. 5:4. Mal. 3:5. This seems to be engraven especially on the consciences of men; so that this sin amongst the heathen was reckoned most atrocious; and even men that otherwise have little religion, will yet tremble at the thoughts of perjury.

[3.] It is a sin that deservedly makes men infamous, so that their testimony is not afterwards to be regarded among them: for what respect can they have to truth that will swear falsely? It looses the

bond of human society; for if an oath cannot bind men, the world would have no security of one another. And therefore such deserved to be hissed out from among others, as the plagues of human society.

4thly, Blasphemy, which is a wronging of the majesty of God, by speeches tending to his reproach. This sin is the most atrocious of all sins; and of this kind is the unpardonable sin. As among men it is a great fault not to believe the word of a faithful prince; yet greater to rebel against him; greater yet to reproach him, disgrace him, speak and use him contumeliously. Men may be guilty of blasphemy against God two ways.

(1.) As they partake with others in their blasphemies. And this we may do several ways; particularly, (1.) When we give no testimony against the blasphemy of others. The custom of the Jews was to rend their clothes at the hearing of blasphemy. And they must needs have a stout heart that can hear it without one way or another manifesting their abhorrence of it. (2.) Much more when men shew any approbation or satisfaction with it, as smiling or laughing at it, when they hear how freely hellish mouths vent their reproachful speeches against God. (3.) When by our deeds we give occasion to wicked men to blaspheme, Rom. 2:24. Thus particularly, (1.) Oppressors and persecutors are guilty of blasphemy, Acts 26:11. (2.) Professors of religion, by their scandalous walk, 2 Sam. 12:14. (3.) Inferiors by their undutifulness to their superiors; as subjects, 1 Pet. 2:13, 14, 15; wives, Tit. 2:5; and servants, 1 Tim. 6:1.

(2.) As they themselves are formally the blasphemers. And so there are two ways that men blaspheme.

[1.] There is a blaspheming of God mediately, when, though men do not expressly speak against God himself, yet with the sword of the tongue they thrust at him, through the sides of his word, way, people, ordinances, works, &c. 1 Tim. 6:1. Tit. 2:5. 2 Pet. 2:2. 1 Cor. 4:13. Mark 3:29, 30. Such blasphemies are very frequent amongst mockers and malicious enemies of the way of God, as when religion is called

madness, fanaticism, folly, &c. the Spirit's assistance in prayer, heat of the brain, &c.

[2.] There is a blaspheming against God immediately, when God is directly and immediately attacked with the blasphemous tongue. And that is,

(1.) When men detract from God what truly belongs to him, and makes for his glory, Isa. 36:20; in the case of railing Rabshakeh. Such blasphemy, some say, is uttered by the French Tyrant, with respect to the bringing in of the Pretender on us, That Heaven itself cannot stop his project.

(2.) When men ascribe to God that which agrees not to him, but tends to his reproach. So did the Pharisees of old blaspheme Christ, Mark 3:30. So do bitter spirits blaspheme God, saying, lie is unjust, cruel, &c. So did these blaspheme when they said, 'Every one that doth evil, is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them: or, Where is the God of judgment?' Mal. 2:17. And many are guilty with them.

(3.) When men insolently rise against God, belching out bitter, virulent, and reproachful speeches against him. So did Pharaoh, Exod. 5:2. 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord.' So did he, mentioned 2 Kings 6:33. 'Behold, this evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer?' Thus Job's wife advised him to blaspheme, Curse God and die,' said she. And so many in their bitterness rising against God under afflictions, are apt to blaspheme.

(4.) When men ascribe that to the creature which is due to God alone. So the Jews, supposing Christ to be a mere creature, accused him of blasphemy, John 10:33. So men blaspheme in calling either Pope or magistrate head of the church. And thus men immoderate in their own praise, or the praise of others, are ready to fall into blasphemy, Isa. 10:13. Acts 12:22.

Each of these four ways men may be guilty of blasphemy against the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost. The world is full of these blasphemies; some blaspheming the Father, denying that relation in the Godhead, as Jews, Mahometans, &c; some the Son, as they do also; and indeed Popery is a mass of blasphemies against Christ; some the Holy Ghost, as those that deny his personality, and the profane world that make a mock of his work.

But the most dreadful of all sins and blasphemies is that which by way of eminency is called blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, commonly called the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is the unpardonable sin, Matth. 12:31, 32. John calls it 'the sin unto death,' 1 John 5:16; which elect souls never fall into, yea even but few reprobates. It belongs to this command. But as I have spoken largely of this sin in a former part of this work, I shall not further insist upon it.

Secondly, Having spoken of the more gross and palpable breaches of this command, I shall now consider otherways how the Lord's name is abused and taken in vain.

1. With respect to his names and titles. They are taken in vain.

1st, When they are not improved for those uses to which they natively tend. Hence the Lord says, If I be a Father, where is mine honour? and if I be a Master where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests that despise my name,' Mal. 1:6. Thus we take them in vain when they have not their fruit in us. Do we call him Father, and not honour him; Master, and not fear him; Hearer of prayer, and yet put no confidence in him; Lord of hosts, and yet cannot quietly commit ourselves to his protection? Do we not thereby take his name in vain? The strong tower of his name is built but in vain, in that case, when we do not improve it.

2dly, When we make an ill use of them, either to encourage ourselves in sin by them, or to drive us away from him by terror, or to any

other use dishonourable to God, and contrary to the intent of the revelation of them to us.

2. With respect to his attributes, God's name is abused,

1st, By the working of unbelief against them, doubting of, questioning, and denying them. Thus the atheistical heart works often in wicked men, calling in question the power of God when driven into straits, 2 Kings 7:2; and when they mind to lie securely in sin, fostering unbelief of his omniscience, Ezek. 9; of his justice, Zeph. 1:12; of his holiness, Psal. 50:21, &c. Yea, thus under temptation it works even in the godly, so that often they are found bordering on blasphemy, through the power of unbelief, questioning his goodness and truth, Psal. 77:8, 9. Jer. 15:18.

2dly, By the aversion of the heart unto them, and its rising against them, Rom. 8:7. There is a natural enmity in the heart of man against God, shewing itself in the aversion they have to his holy nature and attributes. They do not love his perfections; they would wish he were not such a one as he is; and this is the rise of atheism. The heart is glued to sin; and the discovery of God's attributes, his holiness, justice, &c. disturbs sinners in their rest in it. Hence their hearts rise against God, and his perfections.

3dly, By using them to wrong ends and purposes. Thus we sin many ways, perverting the knowledge of his perfections to God's dishonour and our own ruin. Thus the mercy of God is abused to encouragement in sin; his patience to continuance in it; his justice to desperation, &c. Eccl. 8:11. Rom. 2:4, 5.

3. With respect to his ordinances. The name of God is abused in ordinances when we do not go about them after the right manner; for this command directs us to the right manner of performing duties. And as a master reckons his servant has been working in vain, when though he has been doing the thing he bade him, yet he has not done it as he bade him, but marred it in the making; so God reckons those

duties that are wrong as to the manner of them, are a taking of his name in vain, and those ordinances that are gone about in a wrong manner, in vain.

1st, We are guilty of profaning God's name in ordinances and duties of worship, when we are not upright in our end and aim in them; that is, having the honour of his name before us as our great end, 1 Cor. 10:31; shewing itself in seeking to honour him, to get and advance communion with him, and to give obedience to his commands. Instead thereof, his name is abused by going about ordinances formally, out of custom more than conscience, seeking ourselves more than God in them, a name and reputation more than the glory of the Divine Being.

2dly, When we have not a holy principle from which we act, viz. the Spirit of God in us, without whom we cannot worship in spirit, 1 Cor. 12:3; and a renewed heart, 1 Tim. 1:5. Hence it is that no unrenewed man's duties are acceptable or truly good. And no duty can be accepted of God, wherein we act from natural principles, parts, and abilities only, and not from supernatural gracious principles.

3dly, When we go not about duties in the due manner, with those other necessary qualifications of acceptable obedience, which must be sincere and not hypocritical, with faith, fear, fervency, &c.

I shall instance in some particular ordinances how we abuse the name of God in them.

1. In prayer. God's name is abused in prayer several ways.

1st, When before prayer we are at no pains to prepare for it, but rashly and precipitately adventure on it, Eccl. 5:1. How often do we mar it in the entrance, by our not impressing our hearts with a due sense of our own insufficiency, God's greatness and majesty, our own wants; and by not emptying our hearts of all carnal thoughts, and not using of ejaculations to God for fitting us for a more solemn approach.

2dly, In prayer we fail many ways. As, (1.) When we pray formally and hypocritically, our hearts not agreeing with our tongues in our confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings, Isa. 29:13; so that our heart-labour comes not up to our lip-labour. (2.) When we pray coldly and faintly, without fervency of spirit, Matt. 26:41. This fervency consists not in the loudness of the voice, but in the eagerness of the affections, like Jacob, 'I will not let thee go except thou bless me.' (3.) Heart-wanderings much mar this duty, Rom. 12:12. (4.) When we do not pray in faith, but are lifted up with a conceit of our own worthiness, like the Pharisee, Luke 18:11 have no confidence in the promises of what we ask, Jam. 1:6 and place not our sole confidence in the merits of Christ.

3dly, After prayer, when we quickly put out of our heads the impression of our approach, grow vain and carnal, and not look after our prayers as to their success, Psal. 5:3.

2. In praises, or singing of psalms, God's name is taken in vain many ways. As, (1.) When we rashly venture upon it, not labouring to get our hearts in a tune for praise. (2.) When we do not understand what we sing, 1 Cor. 14:15; God can never be praised ignorantly. (3.) When we make not heart-work of it, sing with the voice, but make no melody in the heart to the Lord, Eph. 5:19. (4.) When we are not affected in a suitableness to the matter that is sung, which being very different, certainly requires that our hearts should follow. (5.) When we make no application of the matter to ourselves in singing.

3. In reading or hearing the word, we take God's name in vain, (1.) When we do not prepare ourselves for it, appointing a meal in it to our souls by prayer and looking to God; and when we make it not our business to get our hearts emptied of worldly thoughts and affections, and come with an appetite, 1 Pet. 2:1, 2. (2.) When we do not strive to understand what we read or hear of the word, Acts 8:30; but pass it, as if bare reading or hearing were all. (3.) When we are not attentive thereto, but let the heart wander in the time after other things, Ezek. 33:30. (4.) When we are dull, drowsy, sleepy, and weary

in it, crying in our hearts, When will the Sabbath be over? like Doeg, detained before the Lord. (5.) When we do not receive it as the word of the living God, looking on it as God himself speaking to us, 1 Thess. 2:13. (6.) When we do not subject ourselves humbly to what we hear from the Lord by his word, being affected suitably to every part of the word, approving the commands thereof, believing the promises, and trembling at the threatenings, Heb. 4:2. (7.) When we do not lay ourselves open to the word, to be taught our duty, to be reproved for our faults, to be searched and known as by the candle of the Lord; but ward off convictions, and rise against the speaker when the word toucheth us. (8.) When we hear it partially, having more respect to the speaker, to receive it or reject it according to our opinion of him, than to the Lord's word itself, Acts 17:11, &c. (9.) Lastly, When we do not meditate upon it afterwards, confer about it, and labour to improve it to our soul's good.

4. In oaths (besides what has been already said), we take God's name in vain with respect to them. (1.) When we refuse a lawful oath, being duly called thereto, and the glory of God and the good of our neighbour requires it, Neh. 5:12. 'For an oath for confirmation is to men an end of all strife,' Heb. 6:16; and men might be ruined in their lives, reputation, &c. if men would refuse a just and necessary oath when called to it, which God's honour and our neighbour's good requires. (2.) With respect to an unlawful oath; it is a sin, [1.] To take it or make it; for it is a terrible profaning of that ordinance to make it a bond of iniquity, as Herod did, Mark 6:23. [2.] To keep it and perform it, as he also did, ver. 26; for what is this but to make the name of God subservient to God's dishonour? And that is to be reckoned an unlawful oath, which is of any thing that is false, sinful, unjust, or impossible to us. (3.) When men use equivocations in oaths, or mental reservations; for so he for whose sake the oath is imposed, is deceived and wronged. But whatever shifts men may use that way, God will reckon them as false swearers. (4.) When men swear unnecessarily, ignorantly, doubtingly, without due regard and reverence of God in our spirits. (5.) Lastly, When a lawful oath leaves

no due impression on men's spirits, as a sacred bond which they come under to God.

5. Lastly, In lots. God's name is taken in vain, (1.) When the right manner is not observed in them, where they are lawfully used in weighty matters, as when God is not eyed in the lot, when they do not singly refer and leave the matter to God's decision, and when they murmur and grudge at what falls by the lot to them. (2.) When they are used in matters of very small moment, which are not worthy of an appeal to God's decision, but without any great inconveniency might be otherwise decided. This is a very common sin, which people need no more to convince them of the evil of, but the true up-taking of the nature of lots, as the scripture holds it out, Prov. 16:23 and 18:18. (3.) When they are used in games and plays. For which reason playing at cards, dice, and all games of lottery, are unlawful. For, [1.] That cannot but be a profaning of the name of God, which turns an appeal to God for his decision unto a play. And though men call it fortune, it is certain that it is nothing indeed but God's determination. And it will not excuse men, that they first miscall God's providence by the name of fortune, and then play themselves with it. [2.] It gives occasion to much sin against God, as blaspheming God's providence under the name of fortune and ill luck; and commending good fortune, overlooking providence when it falls well. And it renders this ordinance of lots contemptible, being so used.

4. With respect to his word, men are guilty of profaning the name of God,

1st, By misimproving and misapplying the word of God, as the Pharisees did, Matth. 5. Ezek. 13:19.

2dly, Jestings upon it, Jer. 23:33.

3dly, Using it to the maintenance of erroneous principles, unprofitable questions, and vain janglings, 2 Tim. 2:14, 15.

5. With respect to his works, men are guilty of profaning the name of God, when they use the works and creatures of God to sinful lusts and practices.

6. Lastly, Men profane the name of God, in respect of religion, and the profession of it.

1st, By maligning, scorning, and reviling religion, and the profession of it.

2dly, By a hypocritical profession.

3dly, By a scandalous walk.

To be a little more particular in these things, the name of God is profaned and abused, and this command violated,

1. By malignity, maligning the truth, grace, and ways of God, otherwise called malignancy. It is a heart-enmity and bitterness of spirit, vented by word or deed, against the truths, grace, and way of God, Rom. 1:29. Such malignant were the Jews, who were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming, Acts 13:45. In our father's days, the spirit of malignancy run with a violent stream against the work of reformation, till it had swallowed it up, and is now again appearing in its violence. A different opinion from the truth in point of church-government is not malignancy; but when a set of men layout themselves to bear down the Lord's work in the land, and in the spirits of his people, when men pretending to be ministers bear down and discourage the power of godliness in others, and men in civil power are filled with a spirit of persecution against those whom they can find nothing against but in the matter of their God, and meaner people aid and assist these, and contribute to, or rejoice at the calamities of the people of God, malignant is their name; for malignant is their nature and course of life. And colour it over as they will, God will not hold them guiltless; for they are his enemies that take his name in vain.

By scorning the ways of God, Ps. 1:1. The scorner has a high seat in the devil's court, where he sits on hell's bench, giving out a sentence of disdain against the way of serious godliness, as unworthy of a man, and inconsistent with his honour, sentencing the serious person to be the fool of the company. Thus Satan's madcaps, whom he has blinded, make a jest of the wisdom of God; but the day will come when their scorning shall be turned to roaring, Isa. 28:22.

3. By reviling the truth, grace, and way of God, 1 Pet. 4:4. Revilers are a generation of hell, who are set to gather together all the filth and vileness they can get to throw upon religion and cover it, that the world may loath it, 1 Cor. 4:13. And so with them religion is rebellion, soul exercise distraction, communion with God melancholy fancies. They load men with vile calumnies; and if they see nothing without them, they conclude they are but hypocrites.

4. By hypocrisy, while men pretend to religion and take up a profession, but have nothing of the truth of it in their hearts, 2 Tim. 3:5. Hypocrites indeed take God's name in vain, making profession of religion, not out of conscience towards God, from love to him, or a design to honour him, but for some sinister ends, as reputation, worldly advantage, or at best their own peace and safety; which is a horrid prostituting the name of God to cursed self.

1st, They take his name in vain in their hearts; for the truths of religion, they know, have no suitable efficacy on their hearts or lives, Rom. 1:18. The candle of God is set up before them in their knowledge; but in vain it wastes, for they do not work at it. Their knowledge of sin does not make them loath it. The love of Christ does not constrain them to walk in the paths of new obedience.

2dly, In their mouths. They may go about duties but they go about none in the right manner. Their words are good, but their heart is not upright, Ezek. 33:30. Hence their prayers are an abomination, their best works are but glistening sins, like a potsherd covered over with silver dross. (1.) Their largest duties are but half-duties, and that the

worst half, as wanting spiritual worship, which is the soul and life of worship. (2.) Their service is but self-service. All the streams of the hypocrite's duties disburden in the dead sea, self.

3dly, On their foreheads; for there hypocrites bear it in an external profession: but in vain; for though they wear Christ's livery, they are but the devil's drudges. If they be not such as fulfil the desires of the flesh, they fulfil the desires of the mind; they are under the power of spiritual plagues.

5. By being ashamed of religion, Mark 8 ult. Religion is our glory; men will not miss in a profane world to have it turned to shame; but to be ashamed of it is a sin of naughtiness of heart, and want of experience of the power of truth on the spirit. It is a horrible affront to the majesty of God, to be ashamed of his badge; for that is to be ashamed of him as a Master.

6. Lastly, By being a shame to it,

1st, By an uncomfortable, unsuitable walk, Phil. 1:27. The world takes notice of the agreement that is betwixt the principles and practice of professors; and a disagreement there reflects dishonour on religion itself before them, as if it were all but sham and trick.

2dly, By an unwise walk, Eph. 5:15. We should be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves; for the imprudencies of professors are no small handle to the enemies, and much improved for the reproach of religion. There is much need of continual dependence on the Lord for wisdom, especially that we may walk in wisdom toward them that are without, Col. 4:5.

3dly, By an unfruitful walk, Isa. 5:4. The fruitfulness of the vineyard is the honour of the husbandman, and the unfruitfulness thereof reflects dishonour on him, Rom. 2:24. The fruits of holiness are the best testimony to the divine original of ordinances and institutions; and while men have been violently running down these, their credit

has been supported that way. But, alas! now their credit is impaired by the barren and unfruitful lives of professors.

4thly, By an offensive scandalous walk, Rom. 2:23, 24. The scandals of professors are the stumbling-blocks whereon the blind would brake their necks, Matth. 18:7. They are the reproach of religion, and the dishonour of God. They harden the wicked, and grieve the truly good.

Lastly, By backsliding from it, Gal. 3:1, 2. Apostates cast shame on the name of God in a peculiar manner; for having tried both ways, they practically prefer the way of evil.

III. I come now to consider the reason annexed to the third commandment, which is, 'That however the breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment.'

Here I shall shew,

1. Whence it is that men think so lightly of the profaning of the name of God, so that in effect they hold themselves guiltless.
2. Whence it is that the profaners of the name of God escape punishment from men.
3. How God will not let men escape with it.
4. What is the great evil of this sin, that is so severely threatened?

First, I will shew whence it is that men think so lightly of the profaning of the name of God, so that in effect they hold themselves guiltless. Nothing is plainer than that little is thought of the taking of God's name in vain, especially by those that are most guilty. They heap up guilt in this way, and yet in effect hold themselves guiltless.

1. It proceeds from that wicked and malicious spirit the devil, Jam. 3:6. He is the sworn enemy of God, and does what he can to make men dishonour him. There is so little of the world or the flesh in it, that it seems in a special manner to come from the devil.

2. It springs from the low and mean thoughts they have of God and his dreadful name, Psal. 36:1, 2. They see not the glory and majesty of his names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works: hence they treat them as common things. A view of God in his glory would cure this profane disposition of spirit. When proud Pharaoh contemns God, and must needs be a god to himself, what wonder he regards not that holy name? Exod. 5:2. Paul unconverted was a great blasphemer; but when he saw the light and heard the voice, he got suitable thoughts of Christ, and so was cured of that.

3. There are many profanations of the name of God, that un-tender men will not allow to be such. They are not and will not be convinced of a fault in them, as in obsecrations, appeals to God, adjurations, &c. But a due sense of the majesty of that name would clear people's minds in these things, Matth. 5:37. It is not enough that these things are common. It is so much the worse, when the world is in a conspiracy against God to join it. Though men go in troops to the pit, they shall not be conquerors, but sufferers. Nor is it enough that people have no ill in their minds, when they so profane the name of God. If there be little ill, there is as little good. Were the third command in your minds, it would lay bonds on your tongues.

4. There are many profanations of that name which men do not at all observe, as profaning that holy name in duties by formality, and want of faith and fervency. If they neglect duty, they will be challenged; but their consciences are stupid as to the dishonour done to God in them, Zech. 7:3–6. But these will be mountains in the sight of God, that are but as mole-hills in the sinner's eyes.

5. It proceeds from the passion of anger or malice. Anger is a fire in a man's breast; swearing and cursing is the smoke of this hellish fire

breaking out at the mouth. Those who are hurried out of themselves with passion, do oftentimes find nothing readier at hand than an oath, which they fling out against heaven itself, when they cannot be revenged on them that have angered them. What but a hellish leaven of bitterness and malice wherewith the heart is soured, can bring forth curses.

6. Custom in taking the name of God in vain takes away the sense of it. The heart being careless about God, the tongue gets a liberty; and when it is set on the run, and has got a confirmed custom, it turns just natural: so that many swearers are never aware till they profane the name of God, and hardly know when they have done it, that it is so. But God will not let wickedness go free, because it is confirmed by custom.

7. Swearing proceeds from unwatchfulness. Men let their tongues go at random. Hence oaths fly out ere they be aware.

8. Lastly, In some it proceeds from vanity and hellish bravery. They will swear, that others may see what a fine sort of people they are, who regard not the laws of God, nor the offence of good men.

Secondly, I come to shew whence it is that profaners of the name of God escape punishment from men.

1. Because of the little zeal there is for the honour of God's name in the world. These things strike not so much against our neighbour's good name, life, or goods, as directly against the honour of God. If they stretched their injury that way against men, men would avenge it as their own interest; but, alas! the interest of God's honour is the interest of few people.

2. As the laws of men cannot reach many abuses of God's name, so as for those made against common swearing, they are in effect but a mock, in regard of the little tenderness that way found among those that should execute the laws, who are guilty themselves, or have no zeal to put them in execution. Nay, alas! often we see men are obliged

by authority to profane the name of God, by taking unlawful, unnecessary oaths.

Thirdly, I proceed to shew how God will not let men escape with it; that he will by no means hold them guiltless. Consider that the profaning of the name of God is a sin,

1. That brings wrath upon a land, Hos. 4:1, 2. Jer. 5:7, 9. Abusers of the name of God are a burden to his spirit, and to the spirits of his people, and make the land mourn, Jer. 23:10. And as every one ought to contribute their assistance to the quenching of a fire that breaks out in a house, so should every one to reformation in this point, while there are so many tongues set on fire of hell, that threaten to fire the nations with a fire of God's wrath.

2. It brings wrath upon families, Zech. 5:3, 4. It provokes God to root out families from the earth; for it brings a curse that a house cannot long stand under. O! then, masters of families, do not ruin your families by this; and take heed to your children and servants that are given to this sin, as to those who would pull down your house about your ears. Many times things go wrong, they do not thrive; which is not for want of diligence; they wonder how it comes to pass; but there is even a secret curse from the Lord on families for this and other sins, that consumes all, Jer. 23:10.

3. It brings a curse upon particular persons, God punishes this sin,

(1.) By strokes upon the body, Deut. 28:58, 59. And remarkable has the sin of some profaners of God's name been written in their punishment, while the sin of profaning that sacred name has been as remarkably written on the miserable case of their mouths and tongues, as ever the adulteress's has been on the belly swelling, and thigh rotting. For there is a God that judgeth in the earth.

(2.) By strokes on the souls. It is a heavy word, God will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. It imports,

[1.] That however men overlook and forget these things, God writes them down guilty on every such fact. There is a book of remembrance written with God, whereby none of them all shall be lost. The sinner affronts God and his holy name; but though he packs up the affront for the time, he does not forget it.

[2.] God will call the man to a reckoning for them sooner or later, Jude 15. Though they may pass without a challenge for the time, the time will come that they will get deep challenges for these things, either in mercy or in wrath. Their words shall some time lie as a talent of lead on their consciences, which now they think light of; and shall pierce their hearts as swords.

[3.] However lightly men may look on these things, the guilt of them shall once be wreathed about their necks; and the man shall see to read his own sentence of condemnation for them, under which he must either die, or be released by the Mediator's satisfaction and intercession. They have profaned God's name, and God will have the indignity offered to his honour wiped off, either by the satisfaction of the sinner, or his cautioner, whom he must produce.

[4.] If ever the sinner be pardoned, as his profaning the holy name shall stick to his conscience in a particular manner when once awakened, so after the pardon, it shall make him go with a bowed down back, as it did Paul, 1 Tim. 1:13.

[5.] Lastly, If he be not pardoned, the wrath of God in hell shall lie upon him, Rom. 2:5 and it shall be more severely punished there than many other sins. The man's sin shall continue with him through the ages of eternity, while the violence of his torments shall make him blaspheme for ever.

Fourthly, It may be asked, what is the great evil of this sin, that it is so severely punished?

1. It is a sin that is directly against God, his glorious greatness and infinite majesty. That name is dreadful which men profane, Mal. 1

ult. The angels adore it, the devils tremble at it; and should vile worms of the earth profane it at every turn? Sins of the second table strike directly against men, but this is one of those that go out immediately against the Majesty of Heaven. And of this sort is the unpardonable sin, which, as I observed before, belongs to this command, Psal. 83:9.

2. It is a direct violation of the law of God, Swear not at all; Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Have you no respect to the authority of God? Consider, I pray you, (1.) Who gave you a tongue and a faculty of speaking? Was it not God? Might he not have prevented this by making you naturally dumb, as many are? (2.) For what end he gave it. Was it not for his glory? and will ye use it against him to dishonour? He thereby differenced you from a beast; and will you make yourself like a devil? Now if he gave it you, might he not set laws for the use of it to his glory?

3. It is not only a violation of the law of God, but a breach of men's laws. Swearing has been punished by many nations. With the Scythians, the swearer's punishment was the loss of his estate; with the Persians, bondage; with the Grecians, cutting off the ears: with the Romans, throwing down a steep rock. And the laws of our land are against it, though it is the crying sin of our magistrates, that they are not put into execution. But God is mocked that way, and it is the sin of the people that do not press them to their duty, and inform them.

4. It is a sin that has a peculiar contempt of God in it, striking most directly against his honour, Psal. 139:20. His name is dreadful, and it is that wherein he has displayed his glorious name unto men: to prostitute and abuse it, then, must needs bear a horrible contempt of God in it. It is a proclaiming of our slighting him, and doing what we can to cause that no regard be had to him in the world.

5. It is most directly contrary to the great end of all divine revelation. The first petition in the Lord's prayer is, 'Hallowed be thy name.'

This should be our chief design in all things; for it is God's own design to which all others are subservient, whether in nature or grace. And this flies directly in the face of it, and cannot but be a most heinous sin.

6. It has a particular malignity in it, and in a most special manner proceeds from the devil, as it has less to carry us to it than ordinary sins have.

(1.) What profit is there in it? The thief gets something for his pains, and the drunkard, a bellyfull; but what gets the swearer? Other sinners serve the devil for pay; but swearers are volunteers, that get no reward. What fruit does it bring you, but the abhorrence of serious persons, and the fearful judgments of God.

(2.) What pleasure is in it? The unclean person gets no profit, but a sordid pleasure by his sin; but which of your senses does swearing gratify? If people were minded to give up themselves to all manner of sensuality, yet there is so little that can be strained from this sin, that unless they be resolved to do the devil a pleasure, they might forbear this sin. Love to that sin, then, must be a love to it for itself, a pure devilish love, without the smallest prospect of pleasure or profit by it. And if men will thus court their own damnation, it is pity if prevented from the lowest place in hell, and the highest room among the servants of the devil, who will serve him just because they will serve him.

(3.) Can any say it is the sin of his constitution; We have heard of a covetous, envious, lustful, passionate, &c. constitution, but of a swearing constitution never. Is any man born with it? does the constitution of our bodies incline us to it? In many other sins the body drags the soul; but here the soul, contrary to all God's commands, makes the body its slave, and turns up the tongue against the heavens.

7. Common swearers and cursers, will be found to be men either of consciences already seared, or next door to it. And I would say, (1.) Knew ye ever a truly exercised Christian an ordinary swearer? I believe ye will find it as hard to find a saint a common swearer, as a common drunkard or whoremonger. It is hard to say it is a spot of God's children. (2.) It hath been known, that very wicked and loose men, who were given up to sensuality and voluptuousness, have had a dreadful horror of profane swearing; the little natural conscience that was left them startling at the profanation of that dreadful name. (3.) It is seldom found that those do reform. Many are very extravagant otherwise in their youth, that afterwards take up themselves: but oft-times swearing grows grey headed with men (4.) Has it not been often seen that, they never know till the oath be belched out; yea, some will swear, and know not they are swearing; nay, they will swear that they are not swearing. Whence can this proceed but from a seared conscience?

8. Swearing looks like hell upon earth. I said before that there is no advantage by swearing: But now I must say that they will have this advantage, that their works will go with them to the bottomless pit. The whoremonger will not get his whores there, nor the drunkard his cups, nor the covetous man his money; but the swearer and curser will still drive on his old trade, and that with improvement, through all eternity. I had once the unhappiness to hear a great swearer, who had often been reprov'd and admonish'd, say, he would curse and swear in hell through all eternity. I thought it might be a prophecy. But why should men take the trade of the damned over their head on earth? will not an eternity be long enough to give people their fill of profaning and blaspheming the name of God, and cursing? Why need they begin so soon? there is time enough afterwards. I know nothing on earth so like a damned soul in hell, as a curser or swearer, under bodily pains and despair. And some have been seen to die as they lived, cursing and swearing out their dying breath, to the astonishment of beholders. And if such men should happen to leave the world in the rage of a fever, as many do die raving, it will be a wonder if they die not therein.

I shall conclude all with a very short word of improvement.

1. How can these lands escape a stroke that have so much of this guilt to answer for? Can we think that God will hold nations guiltless, that have come under national perjuries in violating lawful oaths for reformation, that over and over many times have been involving themselves in sinful unlawful oaths contrary to the truth, besides all the execrable oaths and blasphemies vented by a profane generation that have cast off all fear, and that profanation of the holy name, by cursing, swearing, and profaning of holy ordinances, chargeable upon us?

2. I warn all gross profaners of the name of God to repent, and flee to the blood of Christ for pardon; certifying, that if ye do not, ye shall lie under the wrath of God for ever, and that unruly tongue of yours shall cast you into a burning fever in hell, where you shall not have a drop of water to cool your tongue. Have pity on your souls, have pity on the land, and your families, if ye have any. Pity the rising generation. Is it not sad to think of young ones learning to curse and swear as they learn to speak? Where do they learn these things but at home, or from other children that learn them at home? The blood of their souls will lie at your doors, if they follow your steps; and if God pluck them as brands out of the burning, no thanks to their parents, who do what in them lies by their example to ruin them. Say not, ye reprove them, and do-not allow them in it; for an ill example will destroy what ye build by your good advice*.

3. Let us endeavour not only to reform ourselves, but contribute to the reformation of others in this point. It is Gain's language, unbecoming a Christian, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' In several places and nations, there are societies for reformation of manners. And were there but one in a family that had the courage to speak a word for God, to reprove sin, what good might it do, the work being managed with calmness and love? To neglect this duty is injurious to God, our neighbour, and ourselves. But some may object, Our reproofs will do no good, we may as well hold our tongue, I answer,

be in your duty, and leave the event to God. Tour duty ye have laid before you, Matt. 18:15–17. 'If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.' Habitual profane swearers, are surely more offensive to God and good men, than those that are guilty of a single act of fornication, Lev. 5:1. Tell these things to your neighbours that lie at home unnecessarily on the Lord's day. None are more likely to be guilty of these things than such. Be so kind to their souls as to let them know, that if they continue in these things, what has been said here against them, seeing they were obliged to have come and heard our message from the Lord, shall witness against them at the great day as well as against those who have heard the same, if they continue in such courses. I shall close this with that word, Deut. 28:58, 59. 'If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law, that are written in this book, that thou mayst fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.' And O that all oaths, gross or minced, all profaning of the name of God, and irreverent use of it, and all cursing of whatever kind, might end with these sermons against it!

4. Let us all see ourselves in the glass of this command and threatening, and learn to know our guilt with respect to it, and our danger thereby. God will let us know sooner or later, that he thinks much of what we think very little of. And let us be humbled under, and wash in Christ's blood for our sins in taking God's name in vain*.

OF THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

EXOD. 20:8, 9, 10, 11.—Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it.

THIS command respects the time of worship, and is the last of the first table, set to join both together, the Sabbath being the bond of all religion. In the words we have,

1. The command. It is delivered two ways.

1st, Positively, Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. Sabbath signifies rest or cessation from labour. There is a threefold rest or Sabbath spoken of in scripture. (1.) Temporal. (2.) Spiritual, which is an internal soul-rest, in ceasing from sin, Heb. 4:3. (3.) Eternal, Heb. 4:9, 11 celebrated in heaven, where the saints rest from their labours. It is the first of these, the weekly Sabbath that is here meant. Observe here,

(1.) Our duty with respect to the Sabbath. It is to keep it holy. God has made it holy, set it apart for holy exercises, and we must keep it holy, spending it in holy exercises.

(2.) The quantity of time to be observed as a Sabbath of rest, a day, a whole day of twenty-four hours; and the one day in seven. They must observe a seventh day after six days' labour, wherein all our work must be done, put by hand, so as nothing of it may remain to be done on the Sabbath.

(3.) A note of remembrance put upon it; which imports, that this precept should be diligently observed, special regard paid to it, and due honour put upon this sacred day.

2dly, Negatively. Where observe, (1.) What is forbidden here; the doing of any work that may hinder the sanctifying of this day. (2.) To whom the command is directed, and who must observe it; magistrates, to whom belong the gates of the city; and masters of families, to whom belong the gates of the house. They must observe it themselves, and cause others to observe it.

2. The reasons annexed to this command. None of the commands are thus delivered, both positively and negatively, as this is. And that imports,

1st, God is in a special manner concerned for the keeping of the Sabbath, it being that on which all religion depends. Accordingly, as it is observed or disregarded, so it readily goes with the other parts of religion.

2dly, People are most ready to halve the service of this day, either to look on resting from labour as sufficient, or to look on the work of the day as over when the public work is over.

3dly There is less light of nature for this command than the rest: for though it is naturally moral that there should be a Sabbath; yet it is but positively moral that this should be one day in seven, depending entirely on the will of God.

In discoursing from this subject, I shall shew,

I. What is required in the fourth commandment.

II. Which day of the seven God hath appointed to be the weekly Sabbath.

III. How the Sabbath is to be sanctified.

IV. What is forbidden in this command.

V. The reasons annexed to it.

VI. Make improvement.

I. I am to shew what is required in the fourth commandment. This command according to our Catechism, requireth 'the keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his word; expressly one whole day in seven to be a holy Sabbath to himself.'

Here I shall shew,

1. That this command requireth the keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his word.
2. That it requires one day in seven to be kept as a holy Sabbath to the Lord.
3. That the day to be kept holy is one whole day.

First, I am to shew, that this command requireth the keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his word.

The Jews under the old Testament had several days beside the weekly Sabbath, that by divine appointment were to be kept as holy days, and by virtue of this command they were to observe them, even as by virtue of the second they were to observe the sacrifices and other parts of the Old Testament instituted worship. But these days are taken away under the gospel by the coming of Christ.

But that which this command in the first place requires, is the keeping holy of a Sabbath to God; whatever be the day God determines for it; whether the seventh in order from the creation, as under the Old Testament, or the first, as under the New. And so the command is, Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy; not

Remember the seventh day. Thus the keeping of a Sabbath is a moral duty binding all persons in all places of the world.

For it is a moral duty, and by the natural law required, that as God is to be worshipped, not only internally, but externally, not only privately, but publicly; so there must be some special time designed and set apart for this, without which it cannot be done. And so the very Pagans had their sabbaths and holidays. This is the first thing imported here, That a Sabbath is to be kept.

Another thing imported here is, That it belongs to God to determine the Sabbath, or what day or days he will have to be kept holy. He says not, Remember to keep holy a Sabbath-day, or a day of rest, leaving it to men what days should be holy, and what not; but, Remember the Sabbath-day, &c. supposing the day to be already determined by himself. So that we are bound to set time appointed in his word.

And this condemns men's taking on themselves, whether churches or states, to appoint holidays to be kept, which God has not appointed in his word. Consider,

1. This command puts a peculiar honour on the Sabbath above all other days Remember the Sabbath-day, &c. But when men make holidays of their own to be kept holy, the day appointed of God is spoiled of its peculiar honour, and there is no peculiar honour left to it, Ezek. 43:8. Yea, in practice they go before it; for men's holidays where they are regarded, are more regarded than God's day.

2. This command says, Six days shalt thou labour. Formalists say, There are many of these six days thou shalt not labour, for they are holy days. If these words contain a command, who can countermand it? if but a permission, who can take away that liberty which God has left us? As for fast-days or thanksgiving days occasionally appointed, that are not holy days; the worship is not made to wait on the days, as on Sabbaths and holidays, but the days on the worship which God

by his providence requires; and consequently there must be a time for performing these exercises.

3. It belongs only to God to make a holy day; for who can sanctify a creature but the Creator, or time but the Lord of time; he only can give the blessing: why should they then sanctify a day that cannot bless it? The Lord abhors holy days devised out of men's own hearts, 1 Kings 12:33.

4. Lastly, What reason is there to think that when God has taken away from the church's neck a great many holy days appointed by himself, he has left the gospel-church to be burdened with as many, nay, and more of men's invention than he himself had appointed?

Secondly, This command requires one day in seven to be kept as a holy Sabbath unto the Lord: Six days shall thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. Thus the Lord determines the quantity of time that is to be his own, in a peculiar manner, that is, the seventh part of our time. After six days working, a seventh is to be a Sabbath. This is moral, binding all persons in all ages, and not a ceremony abrogated by Christ.

1. This command of appointing one day in seven for a Sabbath is one of the commands of that law, consisting of ten commands, which cannot be made out without this was written on tables of stone, to shew the perpetuity of it; and of which Christ says, Matth. 5:17, 18, 19. 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do, and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.'

2. It was appointed and given of God to Adam in innocency, before there was any ceremony to be taken away by the coming of Christ,

Gen. 2:3.

3. All the reasons annexed to this command are moral, respecting all men, as well as the Jews, to whom the ceremonial law was given. And we find strangers obliged to the observation of it, as well as the Jews; but they were not so to ceremonial laws.

4. Lastly, Jesus Christ speaks of it as a thing perpetually to endure, even after the Jewish Sabbath was over and gone, Matth. 24:20. And so, although the Sabbath of the seventh day in order from the creation was changed into the first day, yet still it was kept a seventh day.

Thirdly, The day to be kept holy, is one whole day. Not a few hours, while the public worship lasts, but a whole day. There is an artificial day betwixt sun-rising and sun-setting, John 11:9 and a natural day of twenty-four hours, Gen. 1 which is the day here meant. This day we begin in the morning immediately after midnight; and so does the Sabbath begin, and not in the evening; as is clear, if ye consider,

1. John. 20:19. 'The same day at evening, being the first day of the week:' where ye see that the evening following, not going before this first day of the week, is called the evening of the first day.

2. Our Sabbath begins where the Jewish Sabbath ended; but the Jewish Sabbath did not end towards the evening, but towards the morning, Matth. 28:1. 'In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week,' &c.

3. Our Sabbath is held in memory of Christ's resurrection, and it is certain that Christ rose early in the morning of the first day of the week.

Let us therefore take the utmost care to give God the whole day, spending it in the manner he has appointed, and not look on all the time, besides what is spent in public worship, as our own; which is too much the case in these degenerate times wherein we live.

II. I come now to shew which day of the seven God hath appointed to be the weekly Sabbath. According to our Catechism, 'From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath; and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian Sabbath.'

We have heard that this command requires a Sabbath to be kept, and that one whole day in seven; we are now to consider what day that is. The scripture teaches us, that there are two days which have by divine appointment had this honour, the seventh day, and the first day of the week.

First, As to the seventh day, it is acknowledged by all, that that was the Jewish Sabbath. And concerning it, consider,

1. Who appointed the seventh day to be the Sabbath. It was God himself that appointed the seventh, which is the last day of the week, by us called Saturday, to be the Sabbath; The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. He that was the Lord of time made this designation of the time at first.

2. Wherefore did God at first appoint the seventh? The reason of this was, that as God rested that day from all his works of creation, men might, after his example, rest on that day from their own works, that they might remember his, and celebrate the praises of the Creator. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth,—and rested the seventh day. The work of creation was performed in the six days, and nothing was made on the seventh day; so that the first new day that man saw was a holy day, a Sabbath, that he might know the great end of his creation was to serve the Lord.

3. How long did that appointment of the seventh day last? To the resurrection of Christ. This was its last period, at which time it was to give place to a new institution, as will afterwards appear. The day of

Christ's resurrection was the day of the finishing of the new creation, the restoration of a marred world.

4. When was the Sabbath of the seventh day appointed first? Some who detract from the honour of the Sabbath, contend that it was not appointed till the promulgating of the law on mount Sinai, and that its first institution was in the wilderness. We hold that it was appointed from the beginning of the world. For proof whereof consider,

(1.) Moses tells us plainly, that God, immediately after perfecting the works of creation, blessed and hallowed the seventh day, Gen. 2:2, 3. Now, how could it be blessed and hallowed but by an appointing of it to be the Sabbath, setting it apart from common works, to the work of God's solemn worship? The words run on in a continued history, without the least shadow of anticipating, upwards of two thousand years, as some would have it.

(2.) The Sabbath of the seventh day was observed before the promulgation of the law from Sinai, and is spoken of Exod. 16 not as a new, but an ancient institution. So, ver. 5 preparation for the Sabbath is called for, before any mention of it is made, clearly importing that it was known before. See ver. 23 where the Sabbath is given for a reason why they should prepare the double quantity of manna on the sixth day; which says that solemn day had not its institution then first. And the breach of the Sabbath is, ver. 28 exposed as the violating of a law formerly given.

(3.) In the fourth command they are called to remember the Sabbath-day, as a day that was not then first appointed but had been appointed before, although it had gone out of use, and had been much forgotten when they were in Egypt. Besides, the reasons of this command, God's resting the seventh day, and blessing and hallowing it, being from the beginning of the world, say, that the law had then place when the reason of the law took place,

(4.) This is evident from Heb. 4:3–9. The apostle there proves, that there remains a Sabbath, or rest to the people of God, into which they are to enter by faith, from this, that the scripture speaks only of three sabbatisms or rests; one after the works of creation, another after the coming into Canaan; and David's words cannot be understood of the first, for that was over, ver. 3 and so was the other; therefore there remaineth a rest for the people of God, ver. 9.

Some allege against this, that the patriarchs did not observe the Sabbath, because there was no mention made of it in the scriptures. But this is no just prejudice; for at that rate we might as well conclude it was not observed all the time of the judges, Samuel and Saul; for it is no where recorded in that history that they did. Yea, though the patriarchs had not obeyed it, yet that could no more militate against the first institution, than polygamy against the first institution of marriage. But as from the patriarchs sacrificing, we infer the divine appointment of sacrifice, so from the institution of the Sabbath, we may infer their keeping it. And their counting by weeks, as Noah did, Gen. 8:10, 12; and Laban with Jacob, Gen. 19:27, 28. doth not obscurely shew it; for to what end did they use this computation, but that the Sabbath might be distinguished from other days? And the piety of the patriarchs persuades us, that they observed that solemn day for worship; and if any day, what but that designed of God?

Secondly, As to the Sabbath of the first day of the week,

1. Consider the date of it, which was from the resurrection of Christ, to continue to the end of the world; for the days of the gospel are the last days.

2. How the Sabbath could be changed from the seventh to the first day of the week. The fourth command holds out a Sabbath to be kept, and that one in seven. As for the designation of the day, he that designed one could design another; and the substituting of a new day is the repealing of the old.

3. Wherefore this change was made. Upon the account of the resurrection of Christ, wherein the work of man's redemption was completed.

4. By what authority it was changed into the first day. The Sabbath was by divine authority changed from the seventh to the first day of the week; so that the Lord's day is now by divine appointment the Christian Sabbath.

(1.) The Sabbath of the first day of the week is prophesied of under the Old Testament, Psal. 118:24. 'This is the day which the Lord hath made,' viz. the day of Christ's resurrection, when the stone which the builders rejected was made the head of the corner. 'We will rejoice and be glad in it;' that is, we will celebrate it as a day of rejoicing and thankfulness for the work of redemption. Compare Acts 4:10, 11. 'Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.' Hereto possibly may that passage be referred, Ezek. 43:27. 'And when these days are expired, it shall be, that upon the EIGHTH DAY, and so forward, the priests shall make your burnt-offerings upon the altar, and your peace offerings; and I will accept you, saith the Lord.' And it may be called the eighth day, because the first day of the week now is the eighth in order from the creation. As also Isa. 11:10. 'His rest shall be glorious.' As the Father's rest from the work of the creation was glorious by the seven day's rest, so the rest of the Son from the work of redemption was glorious by the first day's rest. On this day it was that the light was formed; so on this day did Christ the Son of righteousness, the true light, arise from the dark mansions of the grave with resplendent glory.

(2.) This day is called 'the Lord's day,' Rev. 1:10. That this Lord's day is the first day of the week, is clear, if ye consider, that John speaks of this day as a known day among Christians by that name. It could not

he the Jewish Sabbath, for that is always called the Sabbath, and the Jewish Sabbaths were then repealed, Col. 2:16. Neither could it mean any other day of the week, wherein Christ specially manifested himself, for that would determine no day at all. And that this phrase infers a divine institution, is evident from the like phrase of the sacrament called the Lord's supper.

(3.) It is evident there ought to be a Sabbath, and that from the creation till Christ's resurrection the seventh day in order was appointed by God himself. It is no less evident, that the Sabbath is changed to the first day of the week, and that lawfully, because the Jewish Sabbath is repealed. Now, who could lawfully make this change but one who had divine authority? who therefore is called Lord of the Sabbath? Mark 2:28.

(4.) It was the practice of the apostles and primitive Christians to observe the first day of the week for the Sabbath, John 20:19. Acts 20:1. On this day the collection for the poor was made, 1 Cor. 16:2 and you know the apostles had from Christ what they delivered to the churches as to ordinances, 1 Cor. 11:23.

5. Lastly, The Lord, by glorious displays of his grace and Spirit, has remarkably honoured this day, in all ages of the church; and by signal strokes from heaven has vindicated the honour of this day on the profaners of it. Of this, remarkable instances may be seen in history both at home and abroad.

Let us therefore sanctify this day, as the day which God hath appointed, and blessed as a day of sacred rest in the Christian church.

III. I come now to show you how the Sabbath is to be sanctified. The Catechism tells us, "It is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the whole time in public and private

exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy.

Here I shall shew, what it is to sanctify the Sabbath, and what are the parts of the sanctification of it.

FIRST, I am to shew, what it is to sanctify the Sabbath. The Sabbath-day is not capable of any sanctity or holiness, but what is relative; that is, in respect of its use for holy rest or exercise. So, (1.) God has sanctified that day, by setting it apart for holy uses, designing and appointing it in a special manner for his own worship and service. (2.) Men must sanctify it by keeping it holy, spending that day in God's worship and service for which God has set it apart; using it only for the uses that God has consecrated it unto.

SECONDLY, I come to shew what are the parts of the sanctification of the Sabbath. They are two; holy rest, and holy exercise.

First, The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy rest. Therefore it is called a sabbath, i. e. a rest.

1. What are we to rest from? On the Sabbath we must rest.

1st, From our worldly employments. God has given us six days for these; but his day must be kept free from them: In it thou shalt not do any work. The works of our worldly calling have six days, those of our heavenly calling but one. We must rest from the former, that we may apply ourselves to the latter. Now, such works are to be accounted,

(1.) All handy-labour or servile employments tending to our worldly gain, as on other days of the week, as ploughing and sowing, bearing of burdens, &c. Neh. 13:15 driving of beasts to market, or exercising any part of one's calling.

(2.) All study of liberal arts and sciences. The Sabbath is not a day for such exercises, as the reading of history, the studying of sciences, &c.

Isa. 58:13.

(3.) All civil works, such as making bargains, unnecessary journeying travelling to Monday markets on the Lord's day, though people wait on sermons, or take them by the way. It is indeed the sin of those that do not change their market days when they so fall out, and a sin in the government to suffer it: but that will not justify those who comply with the temptation, seeing God hath given us other days of the week. If they cannot overtake their market after the Sabbath, they should go away before, that they may rest on the Sabbath, wherever they are, Exod. 16:29.

2dly, From all worldly recreations, though lawful on other days. It is not a day for carnal pleasures of any sort, more than for worldly employments. Our delights should be heavenly this day, not to please the flesh but the spirit; and sports, plays, and pastimes, are a gross profanation of the Sabbath, Isa. 57:13, 14.

Now, this rest of the Sabbath from these must be,

(1.) A rest of the hands from them. The hands must rest, that the heart may be duly exercised.

(2.) A rest of the tongue. People should not give their orders for the week's work on the Lord's day, nor converse about their worldly business.

(3.) A rest of the head from thinking of it, and forming plans and contrivances about worldly affairs.

But here are excepted works of two sorts.

1. Works of necessity, as to quench a house on fire, &c. 2. Works of mercy, as to save the life of a beast; see Matth. 12. Under which may be comprehended, (1.) Good works, such as visiting the sick, relieving the poor, &c. (2.) Works of decency, such as dressing the body with comely attire. (3.) Works of common honesty and

humanity, as saluting one another, 1 Pet. 3:8. (4.) Works of necessary refreshment, as dressing and taking of meat. (5.) Works having a necessary connection with and tendency to the worship of God, as travelling on the Lord's day to sermons, 2 Kings 4:23.

But in all these things it should be regarded, that the necessity be real, and not pretended: for it is not enough that the work cannot be done to such advantage on another day; for that might let out people on the Sabbath, if it be a windy day or so, to cut down their corn, whom yet God has in a special manner provided against, Exod. 34:21; and that would have justified the sellers of fish, whom Nehemiah discharged, Neh. 13:16, 17. And therefore I cannot think that the making of cheese on the Lord's day can be counted a work of necessity, lawful on that day: for as much might be said in the other cases as can be said in this, viz. that the corn may shake, the fishes spoil, &c. Besides, people should take heed that they bring not that necessity on themselves, by timeously providing against it. And when works of real necessity and mercy are to be done, they should be done, not with a work day's, but Sabbath-day's frame.

2. Who are to rest? The command is very particular. (1.) Men. [1.] The heads of the family, the heads of the state, master and mistress, are to give example to others. [2.] The children, son, daughter; they must not have their liberty to profane the Sabbath by playing more than working. [3.] Servants, whose toil all the week may tempt them to misspend the Lord's day; they must not be bidden profane the Sabbath; and if they be, they must obey God rather than man. [4.] The stranger must not be allowed his liberty: we must not compliment away the honour of the Sabbath. (2.) Beasts; they must rest; not that the law reaches them for themselves, but for their owners; either because they require attendance at work, or put the case they did not, yet it is the work which must not be done. This lets us see, that where even their work may be carried on, on the Lord's day without attendance on them, yet it is not to be done.

3. What makes the rest holy? Respect to the command of God.

Secondly, The Sabbath is to be sanctified by holy exercise.

1. Public exercise; of God's worship, Isa. 66:23; as hearing sermons, Luke 4:16; prayer, Acts 16:13, 14; receiving of the sacraments, where there is occasion, Acts 20:7; singing of Psalms, Psal. 92 title.
2. Private exercises of worship, alone and in our families, Lev. 23:3. Neither of these must jumble out the other. God has joined them; let as not put them asunder.

And these duties are to be done with a special elevation of heart on the Sabbath-day; they ought to be performed with a frame suiting the Sabbath, Isa. 57:13.

1st, Grace must be stirred up to exercise, otherwise the Sabbath will be a burden. Grace will be at its height in heaven, and the Sabbath is an emblem of heaven, Rev. 1:10.

2dly, The heart should be withdrawn from all earthly things, and intent upon the duty of the day. We must leave the ass at the foot of the mount, that we may converse with God.

3dly, Love and admiration are special ingredients here. The two great works of creation and redemption, which we are particularly called to mind on the Lord's day, are calculated to excite our love and admiration.

4thly, We should have a peculiar delight in the day, and the duties of it, exchanging our lawful pleasures on other days with spiritual pleasures on this.

The rest without holy exercise is not sufficient.

1. The Sabbath-rest resembles that of heaven, which is a rest without a rest, wherein the soul is most busy and active, serving the Lord without weariness.

2. If it were enough, we were obliged to sanctify the Sabbath no more than beasts, who only rest that day.

3. The rest enjoined is not commanded for itself, but for the holy exercises of the day.

Now, it is the whole day that is thus to be spent, i. e. the natural day. Not that people are bound to be in these exercises without intermission all the twenty-four hours; for God has not made the Sabbath to be a burden to man, but that we should continue God's work as we do our own on other days, where we are allowed necessary rest and refreshment by sleep in the night.

Use. Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. This note is put upon it.

1. Because of the great weight of the thing, the Sabbath being the bond of all religion. It is God's deal-day, wherein his people may expect furniture for all the week.

2. Because we are very apt to forget it, Ezek. 22:26. There is less light of nature for this than other commands. It restrains our liberty in those things that we do all the week. And Satan, knowing the importance of it for our souls, that it is a day of blessing, sets on us to forget it. If ye would then sanctify the Sabbath,

(1.) Remember it before it come; on the last day of the week, on the Saturday's evening, laying by work timeously to prepare for it, Luke 23:54.

(2.) Remember it when it is come; rise early on the Sabbath-morning, Psal. 92:2. The morning hath enough ado: worship God secretly and privately: prepare yourselves for ordinances, wrestle with God for his presence thereto, that he may graciously assist the minister in preaching, and you in hearing, and may bless the word to you. Remember it while it is going on, that it is God's day, a day of

blessing, and ply diligently the work of the day, not only in time of the public work, but after, till the day be finished.

(3.) Remember it when it is over, to see what good you have got by it; to bless him for any smiles of his face, or manifestations of his grace; and to mourn over your failures, and apply to the blood of Christ for pardon and cleansing.

IV. I proceed to shew, what is forbidden in the fourth commandment. We are told in the Catechism, that it 'forbiddeth the omission or careless performance of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about worldly employments or recreations.'

There are five ways how this commandment is broken.

First, By omission of the duties required on this day, whether in whole or in part. Many of the Sabbath-duties are the duties of every day; but the omission of them, which is always criminal, is more so on this day, because on it we are specially called to them. We sin against this command, then, when we neglect the public or private exercises of God's worship.

1. Not remembering the Sabbath, before it come, to prepare for it; entertaining a carnal worldly frame of spirit on the night before, not laying aside work betimes, and composing our hearts for the approaching Sabbath; far more when people continue at their work later that night than ordinary, getting as near the borders of the Sabbath as they can.

2. Neglecting the duties of the Sabbath-morning; particularly,

- (1.) The duty of meditation. Those that are in the spirit on the Lord's day, their spirits will be busy, elevated to heavenly things, and conversing with heaven. The two great works of creation and redemption require our thoughts particularly on that day, Psal. 92:5;

and we must needs be guilty, when, while God has set these great marks before us, we do not aim to hit them. Has not God made it a day of blessing? should not we then consider our wants, miseries, and needs, and sharpen our appetites after that food that is set before us in ordinances on that day?

(2.) Secret prayer. The Sabbath-morning is a special time for wrestling with God, confessing, petitioning, and giving thanks. Then should there be wrestling for the blessing on the day of blessing. And the neglect of it is a very bad beginning for that good day. When will they come to God's door that will not come then? Psal. 91:1, 2.

(3.) Family-exercise. This command has a special respect to family-religion. As God will have the family to mind and see to their own work on the six days, so he calls them to mind his together on the Sabbath. Every family is to be at church, especially on the Lord's day. And if people came with their hearts warmed from family-duties to the public, they would speed.

3. Neglect of the public exercises of God's worship, Heb. 10:25. By this neglect the Sabbath is profaned. The public ordinances on the Lord's day, whatever they do else, they keep up a standard for Christ in the world; and to slight them is to fill the world with atheism and profaneness. As it would be the sin of ministers not to administer them, so it is the sin of people not to attend on them. But O how does this profanation abound, by unnecessary absenting from public ordinances! It is not enough to spend the time in private. God requires both; and the one must not jostle out the other. Nothing should be admitted as an excuse in this, but what will bear weight when the conscience is sisted before God.

4. Neglecting the duties of the day when the public work is over. The Sabbath is not over when the public work is over. When we go home to our houses, we must keep the Sabbath there too, Lev. 23:3. It ought not to be an idle time. Ye ought to retire by yourselves, and meditate on what ye have heard, on your behaviour at the public

ordinances, and be humbled for your failings; confer together about the word, renew your calling on God in secret, and in your families, and with variety of holy exercises spend what remains of the day.

Secondly, The Sabbath is profaned by a careless performance of the duties required. Though we perform the duties themselves, we may profane the Sabbath by the way of managing them. Now, it is a careless performance to perform them,

1. Hypocritically, Matth. 15:7 while the body is exercised in Sabbath's work, but the heart goes not along with it.

2. Carnally, in an earthly frame of spirit, the heart nothing savouring of heaven, but still of the world. Hence are so many distracting thoughts about worldly things, that the heart cannot be intent on the duty of the day, Amos 8:5.

3. Heartlessly and coldly. The Sabbath should be called a delight; a special vigour and alacrity is required to Sabbath-duties. But O how flat, heartless, dead, and dull are we for the most part! so that many are quite out of their element on the Lord's day, and never come to themselves, or any alacrity of spirit, till the Sabbath be over, and they return to their business.

4. To perform them with a weariness of them, or in them, Mal. 1:13. Alas! is not the Sabbath the most wearisome day of all the week to many? The rest of the Sabbath is more burdensome than the toil of other days. How will such take with heaven, where there is an eternal rest, an everlasting Sabbath? This is a contempt of God and of his day.

Thirdly, The Sabbath is profaned by idleness. God has made the Sabbath a rest, but not a mere rest. He never allows idleness: on the week-days we must not be idle, or we misspend our own time. On the Lord's day we must not be idle, or we misspend and profane God's time. Thus the Sabbath is idled away and profaned.

1. By unnecessary, unseasonable sleeping in that day; lying long in the Sabbath-morning, going soon to bed that night, to cut God's day as short as may be; and much more sleeping in any other time of the day, to put off the time.

2. By vain gadding abroad on the Lord's day, through the fields, or gathering together about the doors, to idle away the time in company. It is very necessary that people keep within doors on the Lord's day as much as may be; and if necessity or conveniency call them forth, that they carry their Sabbath's work with them.

3. By vain and idle discourse or thoughts. We must give an account of every idle word spoken on any day, far more for those spoken on the Lord's day, which are doubly sinful.

Fourthly, The Sabbath is profaned by doing that which is in itself sinful. To do those things on the Lord's day that ought not to be done any day, is a sin highly aggravated. Thus the Sabbath is profaned by people's discouraging others from attending ordinances, instead of attending themselves; swearing or cursing on that day, instead of praising God. The better the day, the worse is the deed. How fearful must their doom be who wait that time for their wicked pranks, as some dishonest servants, and other naughty persons, who chuse the time that others are at church for their hidden works of dishonesty; because then they get most secrecy? And indeed the devil is very busy that way, and has brought some on to commit such things on the Sabbath-day as have brought them to an ill end.

Lastly, By unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about worldly employments or recreations. The Sabbath is profaned,

1. By carnal recreations, nowise necessary nor suitable to the work of the Sabbath; such as, all carnal pleasures, sports, plays, and pastimes, Isa. 58:13.

2. By following worldly employments on that day, working or going about ordinary business, except in cases of necessity and mercy,

Matth. 24:20. Though, where real necessity or mercy is, it is an abuse of that day to forbear such things, as sometimes the Jews did, who being attacked on the Lord's day, would not defend themselves.

3. By unnecessary thoughts or discourse about them; for that day is a day of rest for them every way; and we should never think of nor talk about them.

O let us be deeply humbled before the Lord under the sense of our profanations of the Sabbath! for who can plead innocent here? We are all guilty in some shape or other, and had need to flee to the atoning blood of Jesus for the expiation of this and all our other sins.

V. I come now to consider the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment. And these, according to the Catechism, are, 'God's allowing us six days in the week for our own employments; his challenging a special propriety in the seventh; his own example; and his blessing the Sabbath-day.'

This command God has enforced by four reasons,

1. The first reason is taken from the equity of this command. God has allowed us six days of seven for our own business, and has reserved but one for himself. In dividing our time betwixt himself and us, he has made our share great, six for one. Consider the force of this reason.

1st, We have time enough to serve ourselves in the six days, and shall we not serve God on the seventh? They that will not be satisfied with six, would as little be satisfied with sixteen. But carnal-hearts are like a sand-bed to devour that which is holy. Nay,

2dly, We have time enough to tire ourselves on the six days in our own employments; it is a kindness that we are obliged to rest on the Lord's day. Our interest is our duty, and our duty is our interest. It is a kindness to our bodies, and souls too. And shall we not be engaged by it to sanctify the Sabbath?

3dly, There is time enough to raise the appetite for the Sabbath. It comes so seldom, though so sweet to the exercised soul, that we may long for it, and rejoice at the return of it. It is sad if six days' interval cannot beget in us spiritual appetite.

4thly, God might have allowed us one day, and taken six to himself. Who could have quarrelled the Lord of time? Has he reserved but one for six, and shall we grudge it him? The sentence of David in the parable against the rich man that took away the poor man's ewe lamb, is applicable here: 'The man that hath done this thing shall surely die; and he shall restore the lamb fourfold,' &c. 2 Sam. 12.

2. The second reason is taken from God's challenging a special propriety in the Sabbath-day; But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. All days are his; but this is his in a peculiar manner, Rev. 1:10. He has set a mark on it for himself to be reserved to himself. Consider the force of this reason.

1st, If we have a God, it is reasonable that God should have a time set apart for his service, the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. The heathen had days set apart for the honour of their idols; though the dumb idols could not demand them, yet they gave them. Papists have days set apart for saints, who are to them a sort of gods, though some of them, as Paul has forbidden it. And wilt thou not keep holy the Sabbath of the Lord thy God?

2dly, It is sacrilege, the worst of theft, to profane the Sabbath-day. It is a robbing of God, a stealing of time from him that is consecrated to him, and that is dangerous, Prov. 20:25. We justly blame the churches of Rome and England, for robbing people of a great many days which God has given us; but how may we blame ourselves for robbing God of the day he has kept from us, and taken to himself? Alas! our zeal for God is far below our zeal for ourselves. They stick to their saints' days, but how weary are we of God's days? Mal. 3:8.

3. The third reason is taken from God's example, who, though he could have perfected the world in a moment, yet, spent six days in it, and but six days, resting the seventh, taking a complacency in the work of his own hand; and this is an example to be imitated by us. Consider the force of this reason.

1st, God's example proposed for imitation is a most binding rule, Eph. 5:1. 'Be ye followers of God.' What God does is best done, and we must labour to write after his copy.

2dly, The profaning of the Sabbath is a most eminent and signal contempt of God and of his works. Did God rest on the Sabbath, taking a complacency in the six days' works? Our not doing so is an undervaluing of what God so highly esteemed, slighting of what he so much prized, and consequently a contempt of himself and his works too.

4. The fourth reason is taken from his blessing the Sabbath-day. His blessing that day is his blessing it as a mean of blessing us in the keeping of it. It imports,

1st, The Lord's putting a peculiar honour on it beyond all other days. It is the 'holy of the Lord and honourable.' The King of heaven has made it the queen of days. Therefore it should be our question, What shall be done to that day the King delighteth to honour? Let us beware of levelling that with common things which God hath so far advanced above them.

2dly, That the Lord has set it apart for a spiritual blessing to his people, so that in the sanctification of that day we may look for a blessing, Isa. 56:6, 7; nay, that the Lord will multiply his blessings on that day more on his people than any other days wherein they seek it. So that, as the Lord requires more on that day than on any other days, he also gives more.

3dly, That the Lord will make it even a spring of temporal blessings. He will not let the day of blessing be a curse to people in their

temporal affairs. They shall be at no loss in their worldly things by the Sabbath rest, Lev. 25:20, 22. Conscientious keepers of the Sabbath will be found to thrive as well otherwise as those who are not. The force of this reason is,

(1.) God's honour by keeping that day, that we may get his blessings on it showered down upon us. So that the profanation of the Sabbath is like profane Esau's rejecting the blessing.

(2.) Our own interest. Is it a special day for blessing, and shall we not observe it? It is an unworthy mistake to look upon the Sabbath as so much lost time. No time is so gainful as a Sabbath ho-lily observed. And indeed the great reason of the profaning of the Sabbath may be found to lie,

[1.] In carnality and worldly mindedness. The Sabbath is no delight to many. Why? Because heaven would be none to them, for they savour not the things of God. The heart that is drowned in the cares or pleasures of the world, all the week over, is as hard to get into a Sabbath-frame, as wet wood to take fire.

[2.] Insensibleness of their need of spiritual blessings. They are not sensible of their wants, and hence they despise the blessing. He that has nothing to buy or sell can stay at home on the market-day, and the full soul cares not for God's day.

[3.] The not believing of the blessing of that day. They that think they may come as good speed any day in the duties of the day as on the Lord's day, no wonder they count God's day, and the duties of the day, as common.

USE. Let me exhort you then to beware of profaning the Sabbath. Learn to keep it holy. And therefore I would call you here to several duties.

1. Remember the Sabbath-day, before it come, to prepare for it, and let your eye be on it before the week be done. Timeously lay by your

worldly employment, and go not near the borders of the Lord's day, and strive to get your hearts in a frame suitable to the exercises of this holy day.

2. Make conscience of attending the public ordinances, and waiting on God in his own house on his own day. Loiter not away the Lord's day at home unnecessarily, seeing the Lord trusts to meet his people there. This will bring leanness to your own souls, and grief of heart to him that bears the Lord's message to you.

3. Before you come to the public, spend the morning in secret and private exercises, particularly in prayer, reading, and meditation; remembering how much your success depends upon suitable preparation. Put off your shoes before ye tread the holy ground.

4. Make not your attendance on the public ordinances a by-hand work, and a mean for carrying on your worldly affairs. If ye come to the church to meet with some body, and to discourse or make appointments about your worldly business, it will be a wonder if ye meet with the Lord. If ye travel on the Lord's day, and take a preaching by the way, it may well cheat your blinded consciences; it will not be pleasing to God, for it makes his service to stand but in the second room, while your main end is what concerns your temporal affairs. Among the Jews no man might make the mountain of the house, or a synagogue, a thoroughfare. And beware of common discourse between sermons, which is too much practised among professors.

5. When ye come home from the public ordinances, let it be your care, both by the way and at home, to meditate or converse about spiritual things, and what ye have heard. Retire and examine yourselves as to what ye have gained, and be not as the unclean beasts, who chew not the cud. Let masters of families take account of their children and servants how they have profited, catechise and instruct them in the principles of religion, and exhort them to piety.

6. When ye are necessarily detained from the public ordinances, let your hearts be there, Psal. 63:1, 2; and do not turn that to sin which in itself is not your sin. And strive to spend the Lord's day in private and secret worship, looking to the Lord for the up-making of your wants. As for those that tie themselves to men's service, without a due regard to their having opportunities to hear the Lord's word, their wages are dear bought, and they have little respect to God or their own souls; and I think tender Christians will be loath to engage so. But, alas! few masters or servants look further than the work or wages in their engaging together! A sad argument that religion is at a low ebb.

7. Do not cut the Sabbath short. The church of Rome has half holidays; God never appointed any such; it is one whole day. Alas! it is a sad thing to see how the Lord's day is so consumed, as if people would make up the loss of a day out of Saturday's night and Monday's morning, which they do by cutting short the Lord's day.

8. Lastly, Labour to be in a Sabbath-day's frame. Let the thoughts of worldly business, far more worldly words and works be far from you. To press this, consider,

(1.) It is God's command, whereby he tries your love to him. This day is as the forbidden fruit. Who does not condemn Adam and Eve for eating it? O do not profane it any manner of way!

(2.) Heaven will be an everlasting Sabbath, and our conversation should be heaven-like. If we grudge the Lord one day in seven, how will we relish eternity? We are ready to complain that we are toiled with the world: why then do we not enter into his rest?

(3.) The great advantage of sanctifying the Lord's day. He has made it a day of blessing. It is God's deal-day; and keeps up the heart of many through the week while they think of its approach.

(4.) Lastly, Ye will bring wrath on you if ye do not sanctify the Sabbath. God may plague you with temporal, spiritual, and eternal

plagues. Many begin with this sin of profaning the Lord's day, and it brings upon them the wrath of God, both in this world and that which is to come.

OF THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

EXOD. 20:12.—Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

WE come now to the second table of the law, which teacheth us our duty to man, i. e. to ourselves and others. There are two parts of religion, piety towards God, comprehending our duty to God, immediately delivered in the four first commandments; righteousness, our duty to our neighbour, delivered in the last six. As God has set the four first commands to maintain his own worship and honour in the world; so he has covered man with the last six. The fifth command is a fence for him in his station, whatever it is; the sixth guards his life; the seventh is a fence to his chastity; the eighth, to his goods; the ninth, to his name; and the tenth, to all that is his. Over these hedges no man must break, under the pain of the Lawgiver's displeasure.

Religion must run through the whole course of our conversation, and mix itself with all our actions, those that respect men! as well as those that respect God immediately. Therefore in vain do they pretend to religion, that make no conscience of their duty to men. Religion makes not a man only a good man but a good neighbour. And it is observable, that these duties are ordinarily made the trying point to professors of religion. And if ye have got any good of the late solemn occasion, ye will not only love God more, but love your neighbour more; not only grow in duties of piety towards God, but of righteousness to men, giving every one their due, Micah 6:6, 7, 8. Zech. 8:16, 17. Matth. 19:18, 19. Rom. 13:8, 9, 10.

In this passage there is a command, Honour thy father and thy mother; and the reason of it, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. In the command two things are to be considered.

1. The object, father and mother. By these are meant not only our natural parents, but also all superiors, superiors in age, 1 Tim. 5:1, 2; such as are superior to us in gifts or grace, Gen. 4:20 and 45:8; but especially such as are by God's ordinance over us in authority, whether in the family, as husbands, 2 Sam. 12:3; masters, 2 Kings 5:13; in the church, as ministers and other church-officers, 2 Kings 2:12 or in the state, as magistrates, supreme or subordinate, Isa. 49:23. These are more directly meant by father and mother who are to be honoured.

These are the objects of this command expressed. The objects implied are,

(1.) All inferiors; that is, not only children, but the younger, the weaker in gifts and grace, wives, servants, people, subjects. That these are also the objects of this command, is clear, if ye consider, that their superiors are called fathers and mothers to them in the command, and consequently it binds them to be as fathers unto them.

2. All equals; that is, brethren, sisters, friends, neighbours, and all amongst whom there is little difference as to age, gifts, grace, place, or dignity. That the command respects these also, is clear if we consider, that Christ sums up the whole second table in that general, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Therefore our neighbour in the general must be the object of this command, as well as the rest of the second table.

3. The duty, Honour, All these must be honoured by their relatives. Giving honour does not imply the superiority of the person honoured; God himself will honour those that honour him; and all

men must be honoured by us, whether they be our superiors, inferiors, or equals, 1 Pet. 2:17. God has put some excellency of his in every person, for which they are to be honoured. The titles of father, husband, teacher, and ruler, are honourable, for they are God's titles. The station wherein God has set every one, though inferiors or equals, is honourable; for they shine most beautifully, that shine in their own sphere. And there is no person on whom God has not bestowed something of his own, for which that person is to be honoured even by his superiors; esteemed inwardly in the heart, which is to be vented by a respectful outward carriage to them.

For the further opening of these words take notice,

1. That this command, whose scope is the performance of relative duties, is the first of the second table. In which the wisdom of God is to be adored, this command having a general influence on all the rest, so that we cannot transgress the rest but we transgress this in the first place. And it is worthy of observation, that such as bring themselves to an ill end, by murder, adultery, theft, &c. ordinarily pitch on disobedience to their parents as the inlet to all these, Prov. 30:17.
2. That as the fourth commandment is particularly directed to superiors, so this is to inferiors; particularly because subjection and submission is that which goes worst down with the proud hearts of the children of men; and therefore God doth the more expressly require it.
3. That superiors are styled fathers and mothers. And that is, (1.) To teach superiors their duty towards their inferiors, that they owe them such tenderness and kindness as parents to their own children, Num. 11:12. (2.) To make inferiors the more cheerfully and willingly to give due honour to them, 1 Cor. 4:14, 15.

In discoursing from this subject I shall shew,

I. What is required in this fifth commandment.

II. What is forbidden in it.

III. The reason annexed to it.

IV. Make improvement, as I go along.

I. I am to shew, what is required in this command. According to our Catechism, it requires 'the preserving the honour, and performing the duties, belonging to every one in their several places and relations; as superiors, inferiors, or equals.'

In speaking to this I shall,

1. Take notice of God's appointment of several places and relations.
2. Consider the necessity of the performance of relative duties in general.
3. Shew the duties of the particular relations wherein we severally stand.

FIRST, I am to take notice of God's appointment of several places and relations. Observe, that a difference of places and relations amongst the children of men is of divine appointment. All are not alike. Some God will have to be superiors, others inferiors, others equals; yea, the same persons superiors in respect of some, and inferiors in respect of others. This command supposeth this, as the eighth doth a propriety of goods. God is a God of order, not of confusion: so that the levelling design is levelled against the divine will. It serves,

1. To manifest the sovereignty of God that invests one man more than another with dominion and honour, though all are of one blood; takes one piece of clay and sets it on a throne, and sets another piece of the same on a dunghill. He himself is the King of the world, and the fountain of honour.

2. To beautify the world, God, who has made the natural body of man not all one lump, but consisting of several members, some more, some less honourable, for the beauty of the whole, has so shewed his wisdom in the political body.

3. It is necessary in this state of sin, especially for the preserving of the world, which, without rules and government in families, churches, and states, would be like a ship without a pilot amongst dangerous rocks.

Use. Let every one then be content with his place assigned him by the Divine Providence. Are worse than yourselves set above you? God has done it; say you Amen to your own post. And do the duty of your place and relation; and that will be your greatest honour. The moon shining by night is very beautiful, but in the day there is little beauty with her. As little is there in those who, forsaking their own place and the duties thereof, thrust themselves into that of another, and act without their proper spheres.

SECONDLY, Let us consider the necessity of performance of relative duties in general. Observe that the conscientious performance of relative duties is a necessary piece of true religion. The fifth commandment requireth 'the preserving the honour, and performing the duties, belonging to every one in their several places and relations.' True religion consists of faith and holiness; and true holiness is made up of personal and relative holiness. Do not think that religion has no concern in thy domestic and civil affairs. All of us are in some relations, husbands, wives, children, servants, neighbours. Each of these has its own train of duties. Be thou master, servant, &c. here are thy instructions sent down from heaven, how to carry in thy place and relation. Thou wilt say, Who is concerned how I carry to my relations? I tell you, God is concerned, and he will require it. His commands are like a man's shadow; wherever he goes, they follow him. The necessity thereof is apparent.

1. The conscientious performance of relative duties is necessary in respect of the command of God. The command for them is the first of the second table. God, who hath placed us in these relations, binds us by his sovereign authority to perform the duties of the same. The same stamp of divine authority is on these commands that is upon the command to pray, &c. And he will not be satisfied with our overlooking our duty.

2. It is necessary to evidence us to be Christians indeed, no man can justly pretend to be a new creature, that does not make conscience of relative duties, 2 Cor. 5:17. Saving grace goes through all relations, like leaven in a lump, and sets men right in them. It makes the man not only a good man, but a good neighbour, husband, servant, &c. the woman a good neighbour, wife, servant, &c. For,

(1.) Relative duties are an integral part of true godliness; they are a part of the new man, Eph. 4:24, 25. A body that wants a leg or an arm is no complete body; and a man that wants relative holiness is no complete Christian, no evangelically complete Christian, 2 Pet. 1:7, 9.

(2.) Relative holiness is an essential part of true godliness; it cannot be without it, more than the body can live without the soul, 2 Pet. 1:7, 9. 'Shew me thy faith by thy works,' says the apostle; and so may we say, Shew me thy personal holiness by thy relative holiness, Eph. 5:9.

(3.) Relative duties are the great trying points of the work of Christianity, which, if any thing, will try what metal people are of. A man is that really which he is relatively. And if there be any defect in the professor of religion, search for it in his relations, and it will readily be found in one or all of them. The pride of men's hearts makes them often very difficult of access; superiors, through their pride of heart, are apt to tyrannise; inferiors, through theirs, think themselves as good, and cannot comport with subjection. Every man naturally loves to be master, and seeks himself; hence there is no dutifulness to equals.

3. It is necessary as a piece of conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not a complete Christian that has not received of Christ grace for grace. We must prove our union with him by our conformity to him, 1 John 2:6. He stood in various relations, and therein was a pattern to us. He is a loving husband to his church, Eph. 5:25 a faithful Servant to his Father; a kind and affectionate Master to his servants; a dutiful subject to the magistrate; and an obedient child, Luke 2:51.

4. It is necessary to make a useful Christian. Cumber-grounds must be cut down, Luke 13:7. And a useless Christian is like the vine, which if it bear not fruit, is good for nothing but the fire, Ezek. 15. Now, shall we be useless in the world? And useful we cannot be but in our several places and relations, discharging the duties of the same; and useful we are, if we do the duties of the relations wherein we stand. How is the eye, the tongue, &c. useful? Why if they remain in their proper place, and do their proper office: whereas, if they either be removed out of their place, or in it do not their office, they are useless. Let us make a help meet for man, said God, when he brought the first relation into the world. So that relative duties, as we stand in relation to others, in family, church, or state, are the proper orb of usefulness. They that are useful there, are useful indeed; and they who are useless there, are useless altogether in the world.

5. It is necessary to make a straight Christian. If we will go straight in religion, we must go as it were with these two legs, personal duties and relative duties. If either of these be wanting, then our way is like 'the legs of the lame that are not equal,' Prov. 26:7. An unequal pulse shews a distempered body. How many such crooked professors are there, saints abroad, but devils at home? But see Psal. 125:5. 'As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.'

6. Lastly, It is necessary for personal holiness. These are like live coals; put them together, and they will burn: but put them asunder, and they will both go out, 1 Pet. 3:7. A sad evidence of this is to be seen in many, who, while they were single, gave good hopes of

themselves, and had fair blossoms of religion: but being married, and making no conscience of their duty to their relatives, all good goes from them, their spirits sour, their souls wither, and their spiritual case goes quite to wreck.

It is a common observation of such as slight relative duties, that their relatives are not in their duty to them. But though it be so, this tie is laid on them by divine authority, and so cannot be taken off that way. Must I go out of my duty, because another goes out of his duty to me? No. See 1 Pet. 2:18, &c. It is the way to gain them to their duty, chap. 3:1.

USE 1. Of information. This lets us see, that,

1. There is very little true religion in the world, there is so little relative holiness in it. There are two things that make this evident.

- (1.) How few are there that make any conscience at all of their duty to their relatives? We may take up Micah's lamentation over the land at this day, Micah 7:1–6. If we look to the church, what confusions are there, with untender ministers, and unruly people? the stars losing their light, and trampled under foot with contempt. If we look to the state, magistrates abusing their authority, and people despising them and their authority too. If we look into families, what disorder is there? parents careless, children disobedient, husbands untender, wives stubborn, masters rigid, and servants unfaithful. A sad evidence of the decay of religion, that the world is so far out of course.

- (2.) The relative duties that are done, how few of them are done in a right manner? To do the duty itself may please men; but God will never accept it if it is not done in a right manner. A good humour is all with many, who have no principle of a new nature. A natural affection prevails with some; love to peace makes others do their duty: and fear of their relatives puts on others to do their duty; while, in the mean time they are nowise stirred up thereto from the fear and

love of God; nor have they any respect to the command of God in what they do. But is that religion? will God ever accept of that as obedience to him? No, no, Rom. 13:5. 1 Pet. 3:6.

2. This lets us see what need all of us have to be humbled for our defects in relative duties; what need we have of the blood of Christ to wash away our guilt in these; what need we have of the Spirit of Christ to help us unto these duties. Oh! they are not easy: nature will never comply with the work, or at best but bungle at it. We have much need to pray for the Divine assistance in this matter; as without him we can do nothing, even in these outward duties.

USE II. Of exhortation. Set yourselves to make conscience of relatives. For motives to press this, consider,

1. This will be a notable mean of good to yourselves. He that thus lays out himself, lays up for himself indeed what the world cannot take from him. (1.) It will be an evidence of the sincerity of your obedience, if to personal holiness ye join relative holiness too, Psal. 119:6. (2.) It will be a great promoter of personal holiness; for he that watereth, shall be watered also himself. (3.) It will waft you in within the compass of the promise in the text.

2. The conscientious performance of relative duties is the way to do good to others. Would ye be useful for God, or useful to your relatives? then do this? This would make you a blessing like Abraham. There is nothing more convincing, and more likely to make others fall in love with religion, than this, 1 Pet. 3:1.

3. If ye make no conscience of these duties, it will discover the rottenness and unsoundness of your hearts, Psal. 119:6. When God changeth the heart, he writes his laws on it, and these laws among others. And the want of this will bring in that dittay, notwithstanding all thy pretended religion, 'One thing thou lackest.'

4. The neglect of these duties, and unfaithfulness in them, does much ill to religion. The world will observe how people manage the duties

of their relations; and a flaw there is a sad stumbling-block, that makes others dislike religion. That religion that tends not to the good of society, what does it avail? Suppose a professor to have a graceless neighbour, can he take a readier way to stumble him at religion, than to be an ill and unconscionable neighbour? That is a remarkable admonition, 1 Tim. 6:1. 'Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour; that the name of God, and his doctrine, be not blasphemed,' Many pride themselves in their contempt of magistrates and their authority; but I am convinced it has no small influence on the malignancy and atheism of the age, and scares many from the religion that we profess. The malicious Jews knew very well the influence that it would have; and therefore tempted our Lord with a question relative to paying tribute to Cæsar, Matth. 22:16, &c. But see our Lord's practice, Matth. 17:27.

5. God takes special notice of the conscientious performance of relative duties; for indeed those that are most observant of them are most useful for God in the world. What a noble commendation is that of Enoch, that he walked with God? Gen. 5:22 of Abraham, of whom the Lord said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment,' Gen. 18:17, 19; and of Sarah, 1 Pet. 3:6 who 'obeying Abraham, calling him lord.' Nay, at the great day of judgment, it is relative duties that are pitched upon as evidences for the saints; and the neglect of these is the ground of the condemnation of the wicked. It is not what passed or did not pass betwixt God and them, but what passed betwixt their neighbours and them, upon which the sentence of absolution or condemnation is founded.

6. Ere long all these relations will be taken away, and then ye will have no more access to do a duty to them. Ordinary emergencies may separate betwixt the servant and master, minister and people, one neighbour and another. Death comes and dissolves all relations, Job 3:17, 18, 19. This dissolves the relation betwixt husband and wife,

parents and children. Should we not then take that warning? Gal. 6:10. 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith?' When they are gone, many times the neglect stings terribly.

7. Thy undutifulness that way may ruin thy relative; for by such a stroke ordinarily it is not one, but two that fall together. And if God do keep them up, yet ye do what in you lies to ruin them. The rich man in hell desires not to see his brethren. Why, dreadful is the meeting that many relatives will have one with another at that place.

Lastly, The neglect of these duties will undoubtedly ruin you, if ye get not pardon and grace to reform that neglect, Heb. 12:14. If ye have any love to your own souls, then endeavour after this.

I offer you the following directions.

1. Keep up a sense of your own inability for relative duties, and look to the Lord for strength to perform them. People look on these but as common things, and live not by faith with respect to them, and the Lord leaves them so as they mar all. Prayer and faith in the promises are necessary to the performance of these duties.

2. Watch. Satan bends his force against this particularly, because he is in a fair way to ruin two at least at once. So relatives should join forces to resist him, and carefully watch against this subtle enemy.

3. Lastly, Consider ye have to do with God in that matter, and not merely with another. It is he that has set you in your several relations, and has prescribed the laws whereby ye must walk with him in them. He is your witness, and will be your Judge with respect to your behaviour in that relation, according to these laws.

THIRDLY, I come now to consider the duties of the particular relations wherein we severally stand; and they are two in general; those of superiors and inferiors, and that of equals. The former is of two sorts. There are some relations where one of the relatives has

power and authority over the other; and those that import a mere preference. The first of these we may consider with respect to the family, the church, the commonwealth.

In the family we find three relations, of superiors and inferiors, husband and wife, parents and children, masters and servants, wherein one of the relatives has power and authority over the other.

I shall begin with the family-relations, and therein with the first relation that was in the world, and from which all others do proceed, viz. that of husband and wife, and so proceed to the rest in order. And we must be particular, that we may declare the whole counsel of God. I shall show you the laws of heaven with respect to each of these relations, which if observed would make happy societies, families, &c. and when neglected keep the world in wild disorder; and these are laws by which we shall be judged.

FIRST, As for the relation betwixt husbands and wives, read Col. 3:18, 19. 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.' The apostle here lays down the duty of married persons one to another. He begins with the duty of the wife, as that of the children and servants, because their duty, through the subjection that is in it, is the most difficult, and being conscientiously performed, is the stronger motive to the husband, to do his duty, as well as to the parent to do his. And here we have,

1. The sum of a wife's duty to her husband. Self-submission to him, subjecting herself to him, comprehending the duty she owes to him in her heart, words, and deeds. The qualification of this submission, the only restriction of it, is in the Lord; that is, so as it be consistent with her duty to God. That limitation observed, it extends to every thing, Eph. 5:24. (3.) The reasonableness of this, it should not be complained of; it is fit, just, and equitable in respect of God's ordinance enjoining it, the infirmity of the woman as the weaker sex, and the inconveniencies arising on the refusal of it.

2. The sum of the husband's duty is love to her. This comprehends in it the whole of his duty; for love will always be active, and spread itself into the several duties he owes her, yea, and will season all these duties, and tincture them with kindness to her. The apostle comprehends all in this, both to sweeten the wife's subjection on the one hand, and to temper his authority on the other. And therefore he cautions against bitterness, and that both in heart, that he hate her not, nor coldly love her, in words, and in deeds.

Husbands and wives may not carry to one another as they list, but must be dutiful to one another, according to the word of God, as they will be accountable to God.

Here I shall shew,

1. The duties common to both husband and wife.
2. Those more peculiar to each party.

First, I shall shew the duties common to both husband and wife.

1. Conjugal love, Tit. 2:4. They must love one another with a special love, not communicable to another. God's ordinance has made them one flesh, and God's law obliges them to be one heart. They must love one another more than father or mother, yea, as their own flesh, Eph. 5:28, 31. And where that love is wanting, God is dishonoured, and the society is uncomfortable. And however scarce they may be of lovely qualities, we must love them because they are ours.
2. Cohabitation, dwelling together; which comprehends the ordinary use of the same house, bed, and board, I Pet. 3:7. 1 Cor. 7:10. This is such a necessary duty, that an obstinate refusal in either party to dwell together dissolves the marriage, 1 Cor. 7:15 that is wilful desertion. And if a man remove to another place for a long time, and upon no bad cause, his wife is obliged to go with him, if he desire, unless there be some imminent danger, either of her body or soul; and he is obliged to take her, if she desire. For though it belongs to

the husband as the head to determine the place of their habitation, yet he cannot shake off his duty to his wife, 1 Cor. 7:5. Gen. 12:11.

3. Living together in peace, 1 Cor. 7:15. We must follow peace with all men; but there are double ties on married persons to follow peace with one another, and to watch that it be not broken. No war is so unnatural as that which is betwixt them; and none so hopeless if they make it not up betwixt themselves. Did we see a man tearing his own flesh, or a woman beating her head against a wall, we would conclude they were mad. Yet thus it is in effect where there is no peace betwixt husband and wife. The ancient Pagan Greeks when they cut up the wedding-sacrifice, took the gall, and with eager loathing flung it behind the altar, to shew that in wedlock all bitterness must be put far away. There is none so hopeless if they take it not up between themselves; for there is none to judge betwixt them but God: therefore, if they cannot clear, they should bury their controversies, yielding for peace sake. And though certainly it is most natural that the woman should first yield, yet he is a foolish man that will not sacrifice of his own right to peace, and yield, though to the weaker vessel, as Moses did to Zipporah, Exod. 4:25, 26. Certainly whoso first yields shews most respect to God, and stands fairest for the blessing, Matth. 5:9. 'Blessed are the peacemakers.'

4. Carefulness to please one another. The wife ought to suit herself to the will of her husband, so far as lawfully she may, 1 Cor. 7:34 watching against what is displeasing, and doing in things lawful what she knows is pleasing, Gen. 27:9. Yea, and the husband must be careful to please her too, ver. 33. It is a piece of that conjugal tenderness he owes her, not to do any thing that he knows may justly displease her, and even to humour her in things lawful and fit, for her greater comfort; for though he is the head, yet she is his own flesh. This would keep peace.

5. Living together not only in peace, but in love, delighting in one another's company, Eccl. 9:9 living cheerfully and familiarly together. A careless, morose, and unconvertible humour, is opposite

to the end of the state of marriage, which is the mutual comfort of the parties.

6. Honouring one another. The woman ought to honour her husband, walking under a conscientious respect to that superiority God has granted him over her, 1 Cor. 11:7. So that she may not trample upon his character as a husband. Yea, and she must labour to walk so with others, as she may bring no dishonour to him by her indiscreet carriage, but be a glory to him by her meek and quiet conversation, 1 Pet. 3:4. So as he is her head, she becomes a crown to that head. 'A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband,' Prov. 12:4. The husband must also honour his wife, 1 Pet. 3:7 both in his words and actions, shewing his esteem of her virtues, praising her when she does well, Prov. 31:28 reposing trust and confidence in her as to the management of his affairs, and not keeping up the knowledge of his business from her, but communicating counsels with her, Prov. 31:11. This he must do when she is worthy; otherwise that must take place, Micah 7:5. 'Keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.' In a word, he ought to carry so respectfully to her, as to shew that he looks on her as his companion, and may gain respect to her from the rest of the family, Gen. 16:6 and this because she is the weaker vessel, both naturally and morally, in which respect she is more easily crushed and broken in spirit, especially by the austere and undutiful carriage of her husband.

7. Sympathising with one another in all their crosses, and griefs, and joys, whether of body or mind. Being one flesh they must shew it this way. It is a common duty we owe to all, 'to weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice;' and so both their griefs and joys should be mutual, in a special manner; otherwise they will be as jarring strings in an instrument that mars the harmony, 1 Sam. 1:8. And they must bear with one another's infirmities, covering them with the mantle of love, Gal. 6:2.

8. Faithfulness in respect of their bodies, communicating themselves one to another, according to the ends of marriage, with modesty and

soberness, marriage putting the body of each in the other's power; and therefore the apostle in this case forbids them to defraud one another, 1 Cor. 7:5. Another piece of that faithfulness is keeping by one another, and not embracing a stranger, which is that horrible breach that dissolves the bond of marriage.

9. Lastly, A due concern for one another's soul and eternal welfare, 1 Pet. 3:7. They must be helpful to one another in the way of the Lord, doing what they can to advance one another's eternal interest; watching over one another, joining together in holy duties; instructing and admonishing one another, lovingly and meekly, each one proposing to themselves the salvation of their relative, as well as their own, 1 Cor. 7:16.

This is a weighty point, which few lay to heart. I shall lay before you these few things with respect to it.

(1.) Married persons, for this end, that they may be helpful to one another's soul's welfare, ought to walk so together as that they may have in each other's consciences a testimony of their integrity, 2 Kings 4:1. They should take heed they lay not stumbling-blocks before one another, nor carry so as to engender hard thoughts of one another that way. The testimony of God is above all, the testimony of conscience next, but the testimony of a yoke-fellow's conscience after that.

(2.) They should labour to beget and advance the fear of God in one another, to bring them to and carry them on in the truth of religion, 1 Cor. 7:16. They are not meet helps they are only helpful for the body and temporal concerns; for in that case the better part has no help of them. Interest as well as duty engageth to this; for the better a man be, the better husband will he be, &c. No wonder that those who fear not God, regard not man.

(3.) They should entertain communion in prayer and addresses to the throne of grace, praying for one another, and praying with one

another, 1 Pet. 3:7. The husband should hold up his wife's case to God with his own, and the wife the case of the husband; and help them by prayers with, them and for them, which is true Christian help. They know one another's weaknesses, temptations, and difficulties, better than any one else, and therefore ought to be the more particular in this.

(4.) They should be acquainted with one another's case, and therefore inquire into the same, and observe it, that they may the better suit the help to the case, 1 Sam. 1:8. And O what a happiness is it for one to have one that is their own flesh to whom they may freely unbosom themselves! And what a sad thing is it where religious conference is not observed betwixt such parties?

(5.) They should watch over one another. This is living as being heirs together of the grace of life, 1 Pet. 3:7. They should stir up one another to duties and good works; and happy are they who so prove monitors to one another, 2 Kings 4:9, 10. They should warn one another of what appears sinful in their way, and so not suffer sin upon them, Eccl. 4:9, 10. If men see a spot on their face, they will tell them of it; but spots in the conversation are most dangerous. But withal special care must be taken that there be no bitterness mixed with it, for that mars the operation; the season must be observed when it will take best, 1 Sam. 25:36, 37; and it should be mixed with love. Yea, sometimes entreaties should be used rather than rebukes, especially from the wife to the husband, as prudence itself may teach, and may be gathered from 1 Tim. 5:1. 'Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father.' And such warnings should be kindly taken, and readily complied with, as the best evidences of love.

(6.) Lastly, A joint care for the religious government of the family. The one ought not to devolve that entirely on the other, but each take his share; otherwise it cannot miss to be mismanaged. Each of them owes a duty to the souls of their children and servants; and therefore should watch over them, admonish and rebuke, and stir them up to duty; and see that God be worshipped in the family, that it be not

neglected in the husband's absence, or any thing else; for though the wife be the weaker vessel, she is the head of the family under her husband.

Secondly, I come to shew the duties more peculiar to each party.

1. The duties of the husband of this sort may be reduced to this one, viz. that he carry himself towards her as a head for her good, ruling her in the fear of the Lord. It is not a name of power only, but of duty; for he must be such a head to her as Christ is to the church, Eph. 5:23. And whoso reckon upon the authority of that name without eyeing the duty of it, put asunder what God has joined in his grant, and will join when he calls men to an account.

2. The duties of the wife may be reduced to this one, viz. submitting herself to her husband as her head, Eph. 5:22, 23. She is not to lord it over him, but to be subject to him. And in this respect there is a reverence and fear of the husband enjoined in the wife, Eph. 5:33. 1 Pet. 3:2 which is a due regard in the heart to his character as a husband, seeing in that God has put off his own name upon him, God himself being called our husband; a fear to offend him, flowing from love, venting itself in speaking and carrying respectfully to him, 1 Pet. 3:6.

Now the husband as the head of the wife owes her,

1. Protection, so as she may be as safe and easy under the covert of his relation to her as he can make her. For this cause God has given the husband as head to the weaker vessel: and therefore it was an ancient ceremony in marriage for the husband to spread his skirt over his wife, Ruth 3:9. He is to protect her to the utmost of his power from the injuries of others, 1 Sam. 30:18 and particularly from the insults, whether of children or servants in the family, as well as neighbours, Gen. 16:6. And if so, sorely he himself is not to bear hard upon her, but to shew her a peculiar tenderness as the weaker vessel,

a tenderness to her body and spirit too; and not to suffer her, far less to oblige her, to distress herself above measure.

On the other hand, she owes him obedience, a submission to, and compliance with, his admonitions. It is observed of Job's wife, for as ill as she was, when he calls her a fool, she does not give him the same epithet again. Reason itself teaches, that whoso puts himself under the protection of another, must be ruled by that other, and not by himself.

2. Provision, 1 Tim. 5:8. The husband ought to provide for his wife, and cheerfully furnish her with what is needful and convenient according to his station and ability; and lay out himself by all lawful means for her comfortable through-bearing. And this he should have an eye to, not only for the time of his life, but even after his decease.

And on the other hand, the wife ought to be helpful to her husband by her frugal management, Prov. 31:27. And God's word and frequent experiments plainly shew, that a man's thriving or not thriving has a great dependence on his wife's management, Prov. 14:1. While he, then, is busy without doors, she should be careful within; and therefore it is recommended to women to be much at home, Tit. 2:5. Yet she may well go abroad when her business calls her, as Abigail did, 1 Sam. 25.

3. Lastly, Direction, with calmness instructing her, how she should carry in every thing, both with respect to things of this life and of the other, Prov. 2:17. He ought to be as eyes to her, which have their place in the head, and so should be capable to guide, 1 Pet. 3:7.

On the other hand, the wife should be pliable and teachable, 1 Tim. 2:11 yea, and be ready to seek instruction from her husband, 1 Cor. 14:35. She should be obedient to his commands and directions, ver. 34 for in every thing wherein the law of God has not bound her up, the husband's will ought to be complied with, Eph. 5:24. Gen. 3:16.

The reasons of the husband's duties are these,

1. Because husbands are appointed to be such heads as Christ is to the church, Eph. 5:25. And if men would reflect on this, it would make them very dutiful, and bear with many things as Christ doth, else we would be ruined.

2. Because thy wife is thy own flesh, thy second self, ver. 28, 29; and so undutifulness is monstrous.

3. Because she is the weaker vessel, 1 Pet. 3:7; for it hath pleased the Lord to exercise the woman with a special measure of infirmity, both natural and moral.

The reasons of the woman's duty are these.

1. Because the woman was created for the man, 1 Tim. 2:13 compare 1 Cor. 11:9.

2. Because the woman was the first that sinned, 1 Tim. 2:14 compare Gen. 3:16.

3. Because she is the weaker vessel.

Use 1. Let all such as have been, or are in that relation, be humbled under a sense of their sin in that point, and fly to the blood of Christ for pardon. And let every one look on that relation as a serious matter, in which people must walk with God, and under which they are bound to so many duties, of which they must give an account to the Lord.

Let husbands and wives study to make conscience of their duty one to another, and frame their life accordingly. For motives, consider,

(1.) God lays them on. Nature may storm at them, but they are God's commands; and whoso breaketh over the hedge, the serpent will bite.

(2.) Your marriage-vows and voluntary covenant engage to these. Though we forget them, God does not, and will not.

(3.) Your own comfort depends upon them; and so does the happiness in that relation.

Lastly, Death comes, and that will dissolve the relation. Therefore, before that awful event, let every one make conscience of performing their respective duties, that they may die in peace.

As to the relation betwixt parents and children, See Col. 3:20, 21. 'Children obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.'

In the first of these, we have, 1. The duty that children owe to their parents; and that is obedience in all things lawful. The word rendered obey, points at obedience flowing from inward respect to them. 2. The reason of it; it is pleasing to God, who has enjoined it.

In the next place, we have the duty of parents to their children. Where, 1. There is something supposed, that they must use their parental power and authority over their children for their good. 2. Something expressed, that they use it moderately, not abuse it to the irritating of them, lest they crush them and make them heartless.

Parents and children must carry to one another as they will be answerable to God who has given them their orders. Here I shall shew,

1. The duties that children owe to their parents.
2. The duty of parents to their children.

First, I am to shew the duties which children owe to their parents.

1. Singular love to them as the parents ought to hear them. This is called natural affection, the want whereof is accounted among the most horrid abominations, Rom. 1:31. Such a natural affection did

Joseph shew to his father, Gen. 46:20 when 'he went to meet him, fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while.'

2. Reverence and fear. Their fear is to be squared with love, and their love salted with fear, Lev. 19:3. The mother is there particularly mentioned; and that, in the first place, because as people are ready to break over the hedge where it is lowest, so children are most apt to despise their mother; and they being much about her hand while young, lest familiarity breed contempt, God hath expressly provided against it. They must have a conscientious regard to that authority God has given them over them, and fear to offend them, as those who to them are in God's stead.

3. An outward reverent and respectful behaviour towards them. They ought not to be treated rudely by their children, as if they were their companions, Mal. 1:6; but they ought to speak respectfully to them, Gen. 31:35; and carry respectfully to them, Prov. 31:28. This was Solomon's practice even when a king, 1 Kings 2:19; for as the candle if lighted, will shine through the lantern, so reverence in the heart will appear in the outward carriage.

4. A ready obedience to their lawful commands, Col. 3:20. If it be not contrary to the command of God, they ought to obey. Subjection and obedience to parents is the honour as well as the duty of children. Joseph's ready obedience to his father is recorded to his commendation, Gen. 37:13. Yea, Christ himself was a pattern to children in this regard to the parental authority, Luke 2:51.

5. Submission. They are to submit to their instructions and directions, readily receiving them, and complying with them, Prov. 1:8. Man being born like a wild ass's colt, has need to be taught. They are to submit to their reproofs and admonitions, to take them kindly, and amend what is amiss, Prov. 13:1. Yea, they are to submit to their corrections, for the folly bound up in their hearts makes the rod necessary, Heb. 12:9. They are children of Belial, indeed, that will not bear this yoke of subjection.

6. Bearing with their infirmities, and covering them with the wings of love. Whether they be natural or moral infirmities, they would beware of despising or insulting them on that account, or any way exposing them, as some foolish youngsters are apt to do, Prov. 23:22. Gen. 9:22.

7. Following their reasonable advice, and taking along with them the authority of their parents, in order to their calling or marriage. That children ought not to dispose of themselves in marriage without the consent of parents, is the constant doctrine of the Protestant churches. And the reasons are these. (1.) The scripture gives the power of making marriages for children to the parents, Deut. 7:3. Jer. 29:6. 1 Cor. 7:37, 38. Yea, even after parties have consented, it is left to the parent, whether to give his abused daughter to him that has been guilty with her, Exod. 22:16, 17. (2.) The most approved examples of marriage in scripture go this way, Gen. 24:3, 4. 28:1, 2 and 29:19. Judg. 14:2. Lastly, The reason is plain; for the child cannot give away any thing, that is his parents' against their will. Now, the child himself is the parents, a part of their self-moving substance, in which they have a most undoubted property. So, when the devil was permitted to fall upon what was Job's, he fell upon his children, and killed them in the first place. Yet, upon the other hand, no parent can force a child to marry such and such a person; for consent makes marriage, and that which is forced is no consent. The child must be satisfied as well as the parent, Gen. 24:57. So the short of it is, that the consent of both is necessary, and that the parent must neither force the child, nor the child rob the parent.

8. Readiness to requite their parents when they are in need of it; that as they did for them when young, so they must do for them when old, or reduced to poverty. This God requires of children, 1 Tim. 5:4. It is a piece of that honour to parents which the fifth command enjoins, Matt. 15:4, 5, 6. So did Joseph, Gen. 47:12. This was a piece of duty which the Lord performed to his mother while he hung on the cross, John 19:27.

9. Lastly, In a word, children should so live as they may be an honour to their parents; for according as they are, their parents are either credited or ashamed. Yea, and when they are dead and gone, they should be reverently remembered, their wholesome advices religiously followed, and their debts satisfied, so as no body may get occasion to reproach them when they are away.

Use 1. This may serve for conviction and humiliation to us all, who either have had parents since we came to the years of discretion, or yet have them. Who can say in this, I have made my heart clean.

2. I exhort such as have parents, whether one or more, to be dutiful to them according to the word. There is indeed a great difference betwixt children in their father's family, and those who, by tacit or express consent, are left to their own disposal; but the duty of filial affection, reverence, and gratitude, abideth. For motives, consider,

(1.) That parents with respect to their children, do in an especial manner bear an image of God, as he is our Creator, Provisor, and Ruler. So are parents those from whom, under him, we had our being, by whose care and government God provided for us, when we could neither provide for nor rule ourselves.

(2.) Hence it is evident, that do what we can to them, or for them, we can never make a full recompense, but, after all, must die in their debt. But how little is this considered by many, who look on what they do for their parents in a magnifying glass, while they are blind to what their parents have done for them!

(3.) Lastly, Consider, that God takes special notice of your conduct towards your parents, Col. 3:20. It is a piece of duty which God readily regardeth according to his promise; and the neglect thereof useth not to be overlooked, but as it disposeth to an ill life otherwise, so God readily pays it home, so as the sin may be read in the punishment.

Secondly, I come to consider the duty of parents to their children; and I may take this up under five heads, viz. while they are yet in the womb, while in their infancy, from the time they come to the use of reason, at all times, and when a dying.

1. The duty which parents owe to their children while yet in the womb.

1st, Parents are obliged to use all care for the preservation of the child, to beware of any thing that may harm the child in the belly, and especially that may procure abortion, Judg. 13:4.

2dly, Dealing with God in behalf of the child, praying for its preservation, and for its soul, as soon as it is known to be a living soul. I think that no sooner should the mother or father know a living soul to be in the womb, but as soon with Rebekah, they should go to God for it, Gen. 25:21, 22. If Hannah could devote her child to God before it was conceived, 1 Sam. 1:11. Christian parents may and ought to devote their children to God when quickened in the womb. Whoso neglect this, consider not that then the child is a sinful creature under the wrath of God, and the curse of the law; that it is capable of sanctification, must live for ever in heaven or hell, and that possibly it may never see the light.

Lastly, Labouring by all means that it may be born within the covenant; which is to be done by parents making sure their own being within the covenant; for so runs the promise, 'I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed.'

2. The duty they owe to them in their infancy.

1st, Parents should bless God for them when they are born, Luke 1:67. &c. Children are God's heritage; the key of the womb is in his hand; he gives them to some, and withholds them from others; and they should be received with thankfulness from the Lord's hand.

2dly, Giving them up to the Lord as soon as they are born, renewing the dedication of them to God, and accepting of the covenant for them; and procuring to them the seal of the covenant without any unnecessary delay. Under the Old Testament, infants were to receive the seal on the eighth day. Now there is no set time, but common equity bids take the first opportunity, and not delay it needlessly. The undue delay of circumcision was punished in Moses, Exod. 4:24; and the delay of baptism cannot but be displeasing to God too, as a slighting of his ordinance.

3dly, Tender care of them, doing all things necessary for them, while they are not capable to do for themselves, Isa. 49:15. And here it is the duty of the mother to nurse the child herself, if she be able, Hos. 9:14. And this care of infants, the burden of which lies most on the mothers is one great piece of their generation-work, wherein they are useful for God, and which they ought to look on as special service for their comfort in the trouble which therein they have.

3. The duties they owe to them from the time they come to the use of reason, and so forward.

1st, They are to provide for them, and that aye and until they be in a capacity to provide for themselves, 1 Tim. 5:8. This arises from the natural obligation and instinct that is common to men with beasts whereof the wildest will feed their young till they be able to do for themselves. Thus parents are, (1.) To provide suitable maintenance for their children for the present, and to lay out themselves for it, though with the sweat of their brows. (2.) And, as God prospers them, they are to lay up something for them, 2 Cor. 12:14: for though the possession be their parents entirely, yet he is stinted to the use of a part according to what is necessary. Only no man is to take from present necessities for future provisions; but what God has given, let men take the comfortable use of it; and what remains, let them lay by for their children, Eccl. 2:18, 19, 24. But for people to deny themselves things necessary and comely, that they may lay up for their children, is a curse; and if their children should follow their

example, to deny themselves the use thereof, to transmit them to theirs, the use of it should never be had: but ordinarily what the parents narrowly gather, and keep so as they cannot take the convenient use of it themselves, the children quickly run through.

2dly, Civil education, that they may be useful members of the commonwealth. This we may take up in these three things.

(1.) Parents should polish the rude natures of their children with good manners, so as they may carry comely and discreetly before themselves or others, Prov. 31:28. It is the dishonour of parents to see children rude and altogether unpolished as young beasts; and religion is an enemy to rudeness and ill manners, 1 Pet. 3:8.

(2.) They should give them learning according to their ability, and see that at least they be taught to read the Bible, 2 Tim. 3:15. What is it that makes so many ignorant old people, but that their parents have neglected this? But where parents have neglected this, grace and good nature would make a shift to supply this defect.

(3.) They should train them up to do something in the way of some honest employment, whereby they may be useful to themselves or others. To nourish children in idleness is but to prepare them for prisons or correction-houses, or to be plagues to some one family or another, if Providence do not mercifully interpose, Prov. 31:27. Christians should train up their daughters to do virtuously, ver. 29. For their own sakes, let them be capable to make their hands sufficient for them, seeing none knows what straits they may be brought to. And for the sake of others to whom they may be joined, let them be virtuously, frugally, and actively educated, otherwise what they bring with them will hardly quit the cost of the mischief that their unthriftiness and silliness will produce, Prov. 14:3. Whether ye can give them something or nothing, let them not want Ruth's portion, a good name, a good head, and good hands, Ruth 3:11. Sons should be brought up to some honest employment, whereby they may be worth their room in the world, Gen. 4:2. This is

such a necessary piece of parents' duty to their children, that the Athenians had a law, That if a son was brought up to no calling at all, in case his father should come to poverty, he was not bound to maintain him, as otherwise he was.

3dly, Religious education, Eph. 6:4. If parents provide not for their children, they are worse than beasts to their young; if they give them not civil education, they are worse than heathens; but if they add not religious education, what do they more than civilised heathens? When God gives thee a child, he says, as Pharaoh's daughter to Moses' mother, 'Take this child and nurse it for me.' Exod. 2:9. Though we be but fathers of their flesh we must be careful of their souls, otherwise we ruin them.

(1.) Parents ought to instruct their children in the principles of religion, and to sow the seeds of godliness in their hearts, as soon as they are able to speak, and have the use of reason, Deut. 6:6, 7. Such early religious education is a blessed mean of grace, 1 Kings 18:12 compare ver. 3. Not only is this the duty of fathers, who should teach their children. Prov. 4:3, 4 but of mothers, who, while the children are young about their hand, should be dropping something to them for their soul's good. Solomon had not only his father's lesson, but the prophecy his mother taught him, Prov. 31:1. See chap. 1:8.

(2.) They should labour for that end to acquaint them with the scriptures. 2 Tim. 3:15 to cause them to read them. Let the reading of their chapters be a piece of their daily task; and cause them read the scriptures in order, that they may be acquainted both with the precepts and histories of the Bible. Let them be obliged to learn their Catechism, and catechise them yourselves, according to your ability. For teaching by way of question and answer is most easy for them.

(3.) If they ask you any questions concerning these things do not discourage them, but take pains to answer all their questions, however weakly they may be proposed, Deut. 6:20, 21. Children are often found to have very misshapen notions of divine things; but if

they were duly encouraged to speak, they might vent their thoughts, which parents thus get occasion to rectify.

4thly, Labour to deter them from sin. The neglect of this was Eli's sin, for which God judged his house, 1 Sam. 3:13. Endeavour to possess their hearts with an abhorrence of sinful practices, and a dread of them. Carefully check their lying, swearing, cursing, or banning, and Sabbath-breaking. If they learn these while young, they will be fair to accompany them to gray hairs. Let them not dare to meddle with what is another man's, if it were not worth a farthing. Encourage them in taking up little things, and they may come in time to bring themselves to an ill end, and you to disgrace.

5thly, Stir them up to the duties of holiness, and the practice of religion. Often inculcate on them the doctrine of their sinful miserable state by nature, and the remedy provided in Christ. Shew them the necessity of holiness, pointing out Christ to them as the fountain of sanctification. Commend religion to them, and press them to the study of it, as the main thing they have to do in the world, Prov. 4:4, &c.

6thly, Pray with them, and teach them to pray. For this cause let not the worship of God be neglected in your families: but for your children's sake maintain it. No wonder that those children seek not God who never see their parents bow a knee. Ye should take them alone, and pray with them, and teach them to pray, laying the materials of prayer often before them; and let them learn the Lord's prayer, and use it as a form till such time as they can conceive a prayer by that directory. For though we do not think the Lord has bound us to that form, (if he has, the forms of the English liturgy are most impertinent, which intrude themselves on us, and do not leave us to it), yet that it may not be used as a prayer, or as a form, I know none that do affirm; though it is plain it is principally intended for a directory in prayer, Matth. 6:9.

Lastly, They should often be put in mind of their baptismal vows: and I judge it advisable, that when ye have been at pains to instruct them in the principles of religion, and they have attained to a tolerable measure of knowledge, so that with judgment they may personally consent to the covenant, as a child religiously educated may be able to do betwixt nine and twelve years of age, if not before; it would be profitable to call them before you, and solemnly declare how ye have laboured to do your duty to them, as ye engaged in their baptism, and require them expressly to consent unto the covenant for themselves; taking them personally engaged to be the Lord's.

4. Correction, Eph. 6:4. The Greek word there signifies both correction and instruction; and so does the English word nurture. They must go together; for instruction without correction will hardly succeed. Parents must keep their children in subjection; if they lose their authority over them, the children will be children of Belial indeed, without a yoke, the end of which will be sad, Prov. 29:15. They must not only be corrected by reproof, but, when need is, with stripes, Prov. 19:18. Begin early, as soon as they are capable to be bettered by it; and let your love to them engage you to it; and not restrain you, Prov. 13:24. As ever ye would keep them out of hell, correct them, Prov. 23:13, 14. I offer the following advices in this point.

(1.) Take heed that ye correct not your children just to satisfy your own passion; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. That is revenge, not correction. Let the end of your correction be the child's good. It were good that parents, if they find themselves in a passion, would first beat down their own disordered spirits before they beat the child.

(2.) Let them know well wherefore ye correct them: for if the child know not what he has done amiss, he can never be bettered by the correction. And therefore pains should be taken to convince them of the evil of the thing; otherwise we deal not with them as rational creatures.

(3.) Consider well the disposition of the child. That severity may be necessary for one, that will quite crush another. A man will not take his staff to thresh his corn, nor yet his flail, to beat out his kailseed. Measure your correction, then, by the child's disposition.

(4.) Go about the work with an eye to the Lord for success. Correct thy child in faith of the promise, Prov. 22:15. 'Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him,' viz. as a mean appointed and blessed of God for that end. It is our belief, and not our blows, that will do the business. And no doubt the neglect of this is one main cause why correction oft-times does no good.

Lastly, Take heed ye correct not your children only for faults against yourselves, letting them pass with their sins against God. Many will give them a blow for a disrespectful word against themselves, who for lying, banning, Sabbath-breaking, will never touch them. Their children's crossing them must not go unpunished, but it will be long ere they correct them for their sins against God.

5. The casting them the copy of a good example, Psal. 101:2. Children are apt to imitate their parents, but especially in evil. He that sins before a child, sins twice, for he may expect that his sin shall be acted over again. Let them, then, not see you do any thing ye would not have them to do, nor speak words ye would not have them to follow you in. Your good precept will not stick, if it be not fastened with a good example.

6. Encouraging them to do well; and when they do well, with kind looks, speeches, and actions, 1 Chron. 28:20. Ingenuous spirits are but abused, when they are always driven by way of authority, and not drawn in the way of kindness. The name of a father and mother sounds of bowels of kindness; it is a pity it should ever degenerate into the nature of mere masterly authority.

7. Lastly, Seasonable disposing of them in marriage, if need be, Ruth 3:1. 1 Cor. 7:36. So did Abraham with his son Isaac, Gen. 24; and Isaac with his son Jacob, Gen. 28; always consulting their own inclinations, not forcing them to this or that marriage against their will, which is but either to oblige them to disobey their parents, or to make themselves miserable to please them. The neglect of this duty may prove a snare to the child, and bring grief and sorrow to both.

4. There is a duty they owe to them at all times; and that is praying for them. Sometimes this is all they have access to do for them. But be they over so far away, they should not be forgotten. Though they be out of your family, they should not be out of your prayers, as Job's children were not, Job 1:5. And parents should consider the several cases of their children, and be very particular before the Lord for them. It is marked of Job, that 'he offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all,' ib. And though in some cases this may not be convenient in family-prayers, yet, in secret, parents should have their particular petitions for their particular children, according to their particular cases.

5. Lastly, The duty that parents when a-dying owe to their children. We must all die, and leave our children, else they will leave us before. Lay up these few advices, then, for that time.

(1.) If providence surprise you not, call together your children, that you may do them good by your advice at your latter end, as Jacob did, Gen. 49:1. And do it timeously, lest, if you delay, you be not able to speak to them when you would. A word from a death-bed has usually more influence than ten words in a time of health; and words spoken with the dying breath of a parent are fair to stick.

(2.) Lay over your children whom ye are to leave, on the Lord himself; and whether ye have any thing to leave them or not, leave them on your covenanted God by faith, Jer. 49:11. Accept of the covenant now, renew it then, and lay the stress of their through-

bearing on that God on whom ye have laid the stress of your own souls.

(3.) Give them your testimony for God, against sin, and concerning the vanity of the world. If ye have had any experience of religion, commend Christ and the way of the Lord, to them from your own experience, Gen. 48:15, 16. If ye have had experience of the evil and bitterness of sin, shew them the ill of it. What courses you have found profitable for your soul, and what hurtful; mark these to them particularly. If experience fail, yet conscience may help you out, if awakened, to this testimony.

(4.) Give them your dying advice to make choice of Christ as their portion, and holiness as their way, to cleave to it, living and dying in it And what faults ye know are in any of them, which ye could not before get reformed, let your dying lips again reprove, exhort, obtest, and testify against, if so be they may be persuaded to hearken at last.

(5.) Bless them, in praying for them to God, the fountain of blessing; declaring withal, that they shall be blessed, if they keep the way of the Lord.

(6.) Let your temporal affairs be so ordered, as that after your decease they may not be a snare to your children, a bone of contention, or an occasion of grudge, one of them against another, Isa. 38:1.

Use 1. This serves for conviction and humiliation to those that are in that relation. In these things we offend all, both in the matter and manner of duty; which may send us to the Father of mercies, through Christ, for grace to remove our guilt, and to fit us to reform.

2. I exhort parents to be dutiful to their children, according to the will of God laid before you in his word. For motives, consider,

(1.) The strong tie of natural affection laid upon you. Our children are parts of ourselves, and therefore our bowels should yearn towards

them, moving us to do them all the good we can. There are three things that may make our affection work towards dutifulness to them.

[1.] They have sin conveyed to them by natural generation, Psal. 51:5. We may rejoice in them, indeed, as God's gifts; but, alas! we may mourn over them as bearing naturally our own sinful image. As they are our children, they are children of wrath; they have a corrupt sinful nature conveyed unto them. Did they derive some hereditary bodily disease from us, how would we pity them, and do what in us lies to help them? but they derive a hereditary soul disease from Adam by us, and should we not pity and pray for them?

[2.] Great is the danger they are in, if we do not our duty to them. They are in a world of snares; if we be not eyes to them, they may fall to their ruin. If the wild ass's colt be not tamed by education, they are in a fair way to be ruined in time by a sinful life, Prov. 29:15; and if mercy prevent it not, they are in a fair way to be ruined to eternity.

[3.] Education is a blessed mean of grace. So was it to good Obadiah, 1 Kings 18:12; and so it was to Timothy, 2 Tim. 3:15; compare chap. 1:5; Why, because it is a mean appointed of God for that end, and therefore may be followed in faith of the promise, Prov. 22:6; 'Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.' Chap. 23:14; 'Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.' Augustine's mother was a good woman; but such was his life, that it cost her many prayers and tears; and weeping to one about his case, 'Go thy way (said he to her), for it cannot be that a son of these tears can perish;' and so it was.

(2.) This is a great part of our generation-work, the work that we have to do for the honour of God in the world, Psal. 78:3, 4 to do our endeavour to hand down religion and honesty to the succeeding generation. And we must give an account of it to God. And as kings must account to God for what they have done for him in their

kingdoms, and ministers in their congregations, so must parents account to him for what they have done in their families.

(3.) The vows of God are upon us for that cause. These are little minded by many, but God does not forget them: As Sarah was under the bond of the covenant by her husband's circumcision; so mothers are under the bond of the covenant by the vows taken on by their Husbands; and are therefore obliged to use their utmost endeavours to fulfil these vows in the education of their children.

And the due consideration of this might engage children to be obedient and pliable to the commands, instructions, and directions of their parents, for their good.

I come now to the relation between masters and servants, for which you may read Col. 3:22 and 4:1. 'Servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers but in singleness of heart, fearing God. Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven.'

The servant's duty is laid down, ver. 22. 'Servants obey in all things your master.' &c. Wherein consider, (1.) The duty enjoined them, 'obedience.' (2.) The extent of it, 'in all things,' in things religious and civil, in eager or harder pieces of service; nothing is excepted but what is sinful; and that is excepted in that clause, 'your masters according to the flesh;' that is, the outward man to distinguish them from the great Lord and master of the conscience; in which respect we are forbidden to be 'servants of men,' 1 Cor. 7:23; and to 'call no man master,' Matth. 23:8. Therefore Joseph is commended for refusing the solicitations of his mistress to uncleanness, and Saul's servants that they would not slay the Lord's priests. (3.) The manner of it; negatively, 'not with eye-service;' that is, when the master's eye is the measure of their work, busy before him; but if he turn his back, they slacken their hand; positively, 'in singleness of heart;' that is, faithfully, as under the eye of God, to whom they must give account.

The master's duty is laid down, Chap. 4:1. Wherein (1.) We have the duty they owe to their servants. It is taken up in two general heads. [1.] They are to 'give them what is just:' that is, what they are obliged to give them by strict law or condition; give them what they owe them by strict justice. [2.] 'What is equal;' that is, what they are tied to by the law of charity and Christian meekness though not of strict justice. (2.) The reason enforcing it is, because masters on earth 'have a Master in heaven,' to whom they must give an account, as of other things, so of how they do to their servants.

Before I come to the duties of servants and masters, two things are to be considered, viz. who are meant by servants, and who by masters.

1. Who are meant by servants. Not to speak of bond-servants or slaves, whose bodies are perpetually under the power of their masters, there being no such servitude among us; servants, who are mercenary, or hirelings, are of two sorts. (1.) Domestic servants, who live in their master's family. (2.) Extra-domestic servants, who, though they live not in their master's family, but by themselves, yet receive his wages, whether for a few days, as day-labourers, men or women; or for certain terms, as herds, hinds, &c. All these come under the name of servants, and owe a duty to their masters, according to the law of God.

2. Who are meant by masters. (1.) There is the principal master, the master of the family, who pays the wages. (2.) There are subordinate masters. Such are, [1.] The mistress of the family, Psal. 123:2. [2.] Fellow-servants, or others deputed by, and having power from the principal master to oversee others, Gen. 24:2. These must be obeyed, as having the master's authority, unless it be known that they go cross to the will and interest of the principal master. And here I shall consider,

1. The duty servants owe to their masters.

2. The duty of masters with respect to their servants.

First, I am to shew the duty which servants owe to their masters. They owe,

1. Inward reverence towards them, and fear of them, 1 Pet. 2:18. Mal. 1:6. They should have a hearty respect to the character of a master, with a conscientious regard to the superiority that God has given them over them, wherein they are, so far, to them in the place of God, Eph. 6:5. 'as unto Christ.' They should fear to offend them, to displease them by doing or omitting any thing which they know will offend them, Eph. 6:5.

2. Honour, Mal. 1:6. They ought outwardly to, carry respectfully to them, whatever they be, if they be their masters, and that both in word and deed. An humbly submissive and respectful countenance and carriage towards a master, is an excellent ornament of a servant. Neither the badness of the master, nor his goodness and piety, leaves servants a latitude in this point. Though they be bad men, yet they are masters, 1 Tim. 6:1 and if they be fellow-Christians, that takes not away the distance of stations, ver. 2.

3. Carefulness to maintain the credit of the family, not disclosing the secrets thereof, nor blazing abroad their infirmities. The king of Syria was troubled to think that any of his servants should be as spies upon him, 2 Kings 6:11. And surely tale-bearing servants must be a great plague to a family. It is reckoned among the mischiefs of an evil time, when there is no trusting of any body that a man's enemies are those of his own house, Mich. 7:6. It is a Judaslike treachery, when men or women are brought into a house to eat their bread and work their work, to go abroad among others and wound their reputation.

4. Standing to the master's allowance, both in things determined by condition, and not determined. Some things, are determined by condition, that the servants may require; and when the master allows that, though the servant may think it too little, he ought not to take more at his own hand. So when servants are allowed to keep so many beasts, and no more, it is their sin to keep more; though they may

think it is no fault if they can get it kept secret, it does no great wrong to the master. But that is injustice to the master, and our sin before God, in whose sight it will be reckoned theft, Gen. 30:23. And in things not determined by condition, as the measure of diet and liberty, certainly the master's allowance in that is to be stood to. As to their diet, it is observed of the virtuous woman, Prov. 31:15. 'She giveth meat to her household:' they do not take it at their own hand. The secret waste that some make in the houses of others for their bellies, is oft-times, I believe punished with hungry bellies when they come to their own. As for their liberty and time, it is carved out by the masters, not by the servants, ver. 15, 18. And for servants to take their master's time to employ for themselves, without their master's allowance, is injustice.

5. Meek and patient submission to the checks and rebukes of the master, not answering again, Tit. 2:9. The ears of servants are bored to hear, and their tongues not filed to speak. It is very good reason, will ye say, when we are in a fault; though many will not take a word in that case, without giving the master as good as he brings. But if they have done no fault, they think they are not obliged to bear a rebuke. But the spirit of God does not teach so, 1 Pet. 3:18, 19, 20. 'Servants, be subject to your masters, with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God.' It may be the master's sin to chide unreasonably, but it is the servant's sin not to bear it meekly. Sarah dealt hardly with her maid, which was her sin; yet the angel will not allow Hagar to take her heels for it, but obliges her to turn and submit, Gen. 16:9

9. Lastly, Serving them conscientiously and honestly. If servants expect their wages, they owe their master service; and God will have them make conscience of their service. If we look to the word of God there is much that goes to this.

(1.) Servants must be obedient and pliable to the commands of the master in all lawful things, Tit. 2:9. Though the service required may be painful and hard yet they ought not to refuse it. Thus Jacob served Laban, Gen. 31:40, 41 without considering, that he was as good a man as his master was. They that put their necks under the yoke, should resolve to bear it.

(2.) Ye should follow the master's direction in the management of the work, not only doing what you are bidden, but as ye are bidden, Psal. 123:2. The master is the eye to direct, and the servant the hand to do what is directed. That the servant may calmly advise the master, there is no doubt; but they that will do nothing pleasantly, if they get not their own way of it, forget themselves and their duty.

(3.) Ye should do your business cheerfully, Col. 3:23. Such a servant was Jacob to his uncle Laban, Gen. 29:20. Sullenness and going about business grudgingly, makes it unacceptable, though otherwise well done.

(4.) Ye should do your business singly. This a servant does when he does not consult his own ease and humour, but his master's true interest, truly aiming at the thriving of his affairs, carefully avoiding every thing that may tend to his loss; and therefore pursuing his interest when the master is absent as well as when present, aiming at his duty, as under the eye of God.

(5.) Ye should do your business faithfully. Faithfulness is a necessary qualification in a good servant, Matth. 24:45. Servants having their master's substance among their hands, had need to be faithful, they having occasion to wrong him easily, if they have no respect to conscience. But the fear of God will make people faithful to men in little and in great things. They must not take of their master's goods to their own use, without his allowance, Tit. 2:10. They must be faithful in their accounts, and not give up false accounts, as the unjust steward did, Luke 16:6; nor allege false commissions from their master, as Gehazi did, 2 Kings 5:22. Jacob's faithfulness was his

comfort, that though he had his master's flocks among his hands, he was free of them, Gen. 31:38.

6. Diligence and carefulness about their master's business, Prov. 22 ult. Negligence and carelessness is a piece of injustice, whereby servants defraud their masters, Prov. 18:9; for the loss may be all one to the master, whether it be procured wilfully or through carelessness.

7. Lastly, Readiness and quickness in the dispatch of business. A slothful lazy servant is most uneasy, Prov. 10:26. Such a one, quick and ready, was Abraham's servant, Gen. 24:33. 56. It is an apostolical precept, Rom. 12:11. 'Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit;' for servants should ply their work, and honestly employ their strength for their master's behoof, Gen. 31:6.

SECONDLY, I come now to shew the duty of masters with respect to their servants, 1. In the choice of them; and, 2. When they have got them.

First, In the choice of servants, two things are to be noticed.

1. Christian masters should look to the conversation of those whom they take to be their servants, that they be piously inclined, as David did, Psal. 101:6 lest they bring an Achan into their camp. A pious servant may bring a blessing to the master, as in Joseph's case. It is observable, that Potiphar saw that God was with Joseph, ere he entrusted him with his business, Gen. 39:3, 4. When Jonah came to the shipmaster, he took him into his ship without asking questions, but ere all was done he was made to do it, Jonah 1:8.

2. They should look to their fitness and ability for their service, Psal. 112:5. So Laban had knowledge of what Jacob could do before he engaged with him; for he staid with him a month, Gen. 29:14, 15.

Secondly, When they have got them. There are two things in the general that they owe unto them.

1. That which is just. Just things must be done to all, and particularly to those that are under us. God takes special notice of injustice done by superiors to inferiors, who cannot so well get themselves righted. And by the law of strict justice masters are,

(1.) To allow their servants sufficient maintenance, whether within or without the house, Prov. 27:27. If masters get their work, it is just they should allow them food convenient, whereby they may be fitted for their work. The mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn was not to be muzzled; for our sakes doubtless God saith it, that those who work should eat sufficiently.

(2.) To give them payment of their wages, the keeping back whereof is a great oppression and crying sin, Jam. 5:4. Masters should beware of all fraud and deceit in this. It stands as a blot on Laban's memory, that he did not keep conditions with Jacob, but changed his wages ten times, Gen. 31:41 for which he might make some plausible pretence as well as others. To pay them what is insufficient, putting them off with any thing that may make up account, is unjust, Amos 8:6. Nay, the keeping it up, and delaying to pay them, when it is in the power of our hand, is contrary to justice, Deut. 24:14, 15.

(3.) They should require no more of them than they are able to do. Servants should not be kept idle, Prov. 29:21; neither should they be rigorously pressed above their power, but allowed convenient time for rest and refreshment, Lev. 25:43. It is just not only because they are fellow-creatures, but fellow Christians.

(4.) Oversight and direction in what they should do, Prov. 31:27. Thus Boaz is found in the field with his reapers. It is very unjust to find fault with what servants do, while men will not be at pains to tell them how they would have their business done.

2. They owe them that which is equal by the law of Christian meekness and charity. Now, thus they owe unto them these things.

(1.) Masters ought to rule their servants gently and meekly, as being of the same blood with themselves, Eph. 6:9. A proud and imperious carriage does not become Christianity. They should moderate or relax threatening, not do all with them with boasting and terror, but by meekness draw them on.

(2.) They should be ready to hear them in what they have to say. It is the character of a Nabal, that 'he was such a son of Belial, that a man could not speak to him,' 1 Sam. 25:17. Job declares himself to have been of another temper, Job 31:13. The advice of a servant modestly proposed, is not to be slighted, 2 Kings 5:13. 14 and if there be any thing they have to complain of, masters should hearken thereto, and do them right, as they would have God to hearken to themselves.

(3.) They should be wary of hearkening to ill tales concerning them, Prov. 29:12. An easiness to believe every tale makes an uneasy life, especially ill tales concerning those in whom people are particularly concerned.

(4.) They ought to take care of them when they are sick, especially when they have none other to care for them. It is highly reasonable that they should be cared for in their sickness by those in whose service they have spent their strength, Matth. 8:6. It is noted as a piece of the cruelty of an Amalekite, that he left his servant when sickness overtook him, 1 Sam. 30:13.

(5.) They should encourage and shew special favour, even by letting something beyond condition fall to faithful and diligent servants. This is very equal; reason, interest, and religion, call for it, Prov. 14 ult. For a faithful servant is one of the best of friends.

(6.) Lastly, They should be concerned for the good of the souls of their servants. For in this case masters are instead of parents to them. They should instruct them in the principles of religion, and labour to train them up in the ways of godliness, setting them on and stirring them up to duty, Gen. 18:19. They should daily pray with

them and for them, by keeping up religious duties in their family, Jer. 10:25. And they should labour to bring them to the public ordinances, Josh. 24:15 restrain them by their authority from scandalous and sinful words or deeds, as from profaning the Sabbath, &c. and reprove them for their sins against God, as well as faults against themselves; and if they will not refrain they ought to turn them out of their family, Psal. 101:7.

Use 1. This may serve to convince and humble both masters and servants.

Use. I exhort servants to be dutiful to their masters. For motives, consider,

1. That in your service ye have two masters, one on earth, and another in heaven, Col. 3:23. Your master on earth says, Do this so or so; and your Master in heaven says, 'Whatsoever he saith unto you do it,' John 2:5. And here know, (1.) That your Master in heaven has given you his orders how ye must carry in service to men, as well as in praying, &c. to himself. (2.) He sees how ye obey these orders. His eye is always on you. (3.) He will call you to an account how ye obey these. (4.) He will account the service faithfully done, service to himself; and, on the other hand, un-dutifulness to men, undutifulness to himself.

2. God himself will be your paymaster, according as ye carry yourselves in your station. (1.) God will reward dutiful servants. There is a temporal reward that God ordinarily bestows on such, Prov. 17:2. 'A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.' And that is what Providence lays to the hands of honest servants, that are not sincere Christians. But true Christian servants shall get the reward of the heavenly inheritance, Col. 3:24. (2.) God will reward undutiful servants too, ver. 25. Ordinarily God writes his indignation against their undutifulness in their lot in the world; but if they repent not, the quarrel is pursued to another world. That is a

sad word, Luke 16:11. 'If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?'

Let masters be dutiful to their servants according to the will of God. For motives, consider,

1. Ye are as fathers to them. The fifth command supposeth this; and so the scripture elsewhere teacheth, 2 Kings 5:13. Ye are civil fathers, and instead of natural fathers to them. They are committed to your charge, as under your roof and power. God would have air superiors to put on fatherly bowels towards their inferiors, as he who is supreme Lord calls himself 'Our father which is in heaven.' If masters would thus look on themselves, it would engage them to their duty towards their servants. When God brings a servant into a house, especially those of the younger sort, either wanting parents, or leaving them to serve you, he says, as John 19:26, 27. 'Man, behold thy son;' and to the servant, 'Behold thy father.'

2. Ye have a master which is over you and your servants too, to whom ye must give account, Col. 4:1. And there is no respect of persons with him. He has given a law to the master as well as to the servant; and in judging them he will not favour the master more than the servant. Pride makes men imperious and oppressive. Here is a sovereign remedy to curb it. Let us remember that we have a Master in heaven, Job 31:13, 14. And so much for family-relations.

I come now to consider the relation betwixt ecclesiastical fathers and their children. These fathers are preaching and ruling elders. Here I shall consider, 1. The duties of ministers and people; and, 2. Those of ruling elders and people.

FIRST, I shall shew the duties of ministers and people.

First, I shall shew the duty people owe to their ministers.

1. They owe them singular reverence, and that because of that honourable station wherein Christ has placed them, sending them to

deal with sinners in his own stead, 1 Cor. 4:1. 2 Cor. 5:20. This founds that debt of reverence, Rom. 10:15 and should be expressed in word and deed. They are the stars whom Christ holds in his right hand; and though they shine not so clear as ye would wish, people would beware of treading them under foot, seeing Christ holds them in his right hand, Rev. 1:20 compare chap. 2:4, 14, 20, &c.

2. Endeared love to them for their work's sake, 1 Thess. 5:13. Gal. 4:14, 15. The gospel is the greatest benefit that men can partake of; and it is very natural to love those who are the instruments by whom the Lord conveys great benefits to us. And as ministers must lay their account with the hatred of those that hate the light, so those that got good of ordinances will as naturally love them as the child does the father and mother. But as there are unnatural children in the family, who little regard the father that begat them, or the mother that bare them; so it is not to be wondered that there are unnatural children in the church, that reject those by whose means they have got any acquaintance with religion that they have, and cast reproaches on the breasts of ordinances, in sucking which they grow up.

3. Diligent attendance on ordinances of all sorts dispensed by them, as word, sacraments, catechising, &c. Heb. 10:25. Luke 10:16. In vain do these stars shine, if there be none to receive their light. The same word that obliges ministers to dispense ordinances, must needs oblige people to attend them; and that even though they may lie at a considerable distance from them, 2 Kings 4:22, 23. The woman there mentioned had sixteen miles to go to the man of God.

4. Submission to them in things pertaining to their office, Heb. 13:17 submitting to discipline exercised by them in the name of Christ; to their instructions, cordially receiving them from the word, to their reproofs, whether public or private; to their exhortations and charges, wherein they hold forth to you the will of God, ib. Jam. 1:21. They who do otherwise, sin against their own souls, as well as discourage ministers by their untractableness, and do but lay up witnesses against themselves, to be led against them at the great day.

It is not the hearers of the word, but the doers thereof, that are justified. It will be no advantage to you to have heard, but never complied.

5. Praying for them, 1 Thess. 5:25. The work in which they are engaged is a great work. Who is sufficient for it? They have need of prayers for them. Your own interest may engage you to it. They may do their work, but the success of it must be fetched from heaven by prayer, 1 Cor. 10:4. We have the sword, but how shall we get the arm? We may compass Jericho, and give the shout; but it is the power of God that must make the walls to fall. Like Gideon's three hundred men, we may bear the lamps in our empty pitchers, blow with the trumpet, and the earthen pitchers may be broken in the cause, but God only can do the work, Judges 7.

6. People should be very tender of the reputation of ministers; it being a tender thing, so much interwoven with the success of the gospel. The Spirit of God, seeing that the devil would be very ready to mark at their reputation in a special manner, by a wicked world and false brethren, has set a double hedge about it, 1 Tim. 5:19. 'Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.' So that ye ought not only to slander them, but to be loath to receive those slanders vented by others against them, believing nothing therein without proof.

7. Lastly, Maintenance. This by divine right is due from people to their ministers, 1 Cor. 9:14.

Secondly, I shall shew the duty of ministers to their people,

1. They owe tender love to the souls of their people.—They should be full of bowels towards them, 1 Thess. 2:7, 8 which should appear in their preaching, and all parts of their work.

2. Diligent and faithful dispensing of all gospel-ordinances to them, word, sacraments, &c. It is a labour, and they must take it so, willing to spend and be spent in the service of their Lord, and of precious

souls. And indeed they are as lighted candles, which while they shine waste, 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Thess. 2:3, 4.

3. Behaving so as they may be examples of holiness and tenderness, Tit. 2:7 for precept, without example, will have little influence.

4. Watching over their flocks, that being ready to be acquainted with their state and case, they may be in capacity to instruct, comfort, and admonish them, &c. as the case requires, Heb. 13:7.

5. Lastly, Praying for them, Eph. 1:15, 16.

SECONDLY, I come to shew the duties of ruling elders and the people over whom they are appointed overseers. And as we are this day to ordain some to that office, I shall discourse of this subject a little more fully than I would otherwise have done in a catechetical exercise. I propose to discourse on this occasion, from that text,

THE DUTY OF RULING ELDERS AND PEOPLE

1 TIM. 5:17.—Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

THE church is the kingdom of Christ, and the holy scriptures are the book of the manner of the kingdom. There the institution of church officers, their work, and the duties owing them by others, are only to be found. And whatever officers of the church men pretend to be, if their office be not found there, they have no due call to their work, but are usurpers and intruders.

In the words read, the apostle gives us the work assigned by Jesus Christ to elders of the church, and what is due for it unto them from

the church: Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour. Here he distinguishes two sorts of elders of the church.

1. Ruling elders. The word elder originally is a name of age; but here, and in many other places of scripture, it is evident, that it is the name of an office, being the name of ruling church-officers, because usually taken out of the elder sort, or that, though of the younger, yet they ought to be men of gravity and authority. Here consider,

(1.) The work of these elders, from whence their designation is taken. It is to rule, and govern the church, as those who are set over it by the Lord. For the Lord has not left his church in a state of anarchy and confusion, but appointed some to rule, and others to be ruled.

(2.) How they ought to manage their work, well; i. e. rightly, worthily, according to the rules prescribed them by Christ, the chief bishop.

(3.) What is due from the church to those who so manage it double, i. e. abundant honour. This honour implies two things, viz. (1.) Maintenance. This is evident from ver. 18. (2.) Esteem and reputation, Phil. 2:29.

Episcopalians, as they have given us the prelate, an officer whom Christ never appointed, so they rob us of the ruling elder, which the text so plainly discovers to be a church-officer of divine institution. To evite the force of which, they turn this older into various shapes; but in vain. For by the elders that rule well, cannot be understood superannuated ministers, as some say; for it is evident that the preaching elder is to have more honour than this elder. But it is shocking to the common sense of the people of God, to honour and esteem a young laborious minister more than an old one, who has spent his strength in the work. Nor by them are to be understood magistrates as others say; for at this time they were not so much as members of the church. Nor are deacons meant hereby, as others say; for their work is not to rule the church, but to serve tables, Acts

6:2. Nor are we to understand by them the fixed pastors of flocks, in opposition to those that travelled up and down to visit and confirm the churches, whom they understand by those that labour, namely, to weariness in the last part of the verse. For the work of the fixed pastor is such a labour too, 1 Thess. 5:12. Nor yet such as were unfit for preaching yet administered the sacraments, prayed with the church, and privately admonished the unruly. But such an officer, I am sure, is unknown to the Bible. It remains, then, that they are those whom we call ruling elders, whose work is, as in the text, to govern the church, but not to preach the word; and therefore they are distinguished from preaching elders, as is plain from the particle especially; as Phil. 4:22. 'All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household.' Chiefly is the same word in the Greek that is here rendered especially; and it plainly implies, that there were some saints at Rome not of Cæsar's household. So here are described some elders that rule well, and do not labour in word and doctrine.

2. Preaching elders: Their work is to preach the gospel; to labour in the word and doctrine. To them in a special manner, by the text, double honour is due, i. e. maintenance and respect, forasmuch as their office is greater and more honourable, not only in ruling the church, as the others do, but preaching the gospel besides. Where, by the by we may see, that if Paul's doctrine had place in the world, the preaching parish-minister would have more honour than the non-preaching bishop, who contents himself with ruling but puts not his shoulders to the labour in the word and doctrine. Maintenance, we see, is due to both sort of elders, by divine right. But it is no sin for either to quit their right in certain circumstances. And with us the ruling elders are allowed no maintenance, but the preaching elders are. The reason of this is the poverty of the church that cannot bear it; and that our ruling elders are not taken off their secular employments, as ministers are.

The doctrine deducible from the text is,

DOCT. 'Ruling elders rightly discharging their duty, are worthy of abundant honour.'

Having sufficiently cleared the divine institution of ruling elders from the text, which is clear also from Rom. 12:8. 1 Cor. 12:28. I shall, in prosecution of the doctrine, shew,

I. What is the duty of these officers.

II. What it is to discharge the duties of that office well.

III. What is the honour that people owe to their ruling elders.

IV. Apply.

I. I am to shew what is the duty of these officers.

The apostle tells us in the general, that their work as ruling elders is to rule the church. The keys of jurisdiction and government are not given to one, but to the unity of church-officers acting together; so, together with the pastor, they are to rule the congregation. God setting a minister in a congregation, says to him, It is not meet the man should be alone, I will make him an help meet for him.—And a society of diligent and faithful elders are a meet help indeed. And without that the weight of a congregation is too heavy for the shoulders of one, as Exod. 18:18. But more particularly,

1. They are to be careful overseers of the manners of the people. Hence the apostle says to the elders of Ephesus, Acts 20:28. 'Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God.' And as ministers are a mouth to the church, so they are to be instead of eyes. And therefore it is necessary, for the good of a congregation, that there be of them in every corner. For they are truly watchmen, whom the Holy Ghost has set over the flock, as well as ministers are. And they ought to acquaint themselves with the way of the people, that so they may encourage those that do well, and warn those that

do evil. And unless elders do so, and communicate their help in that matter to the pastor, he may be long in a congregation, and yet be a stranger to many under his charge; and so ministerial visitations may be very useless.

2. Though they are not to preach the word, yet they are to apply the word privately to people by virtue of their office. They are to have a mouth to speak, as well as eyes to take heed to the flock of God, 1 Tim. 3:2.—'Apt to teach.' There is a word pat to this purpose, 1 Thess. 5:12.—'Are over you, and admonish you.' It is the same word in our text. The word admonish there used, is far from expressing the full meaning of the word the Holy Ghost useth here, used also, Eph. 6:4. It properly signifies 'to put into the mind.' And so it implies a fivefold duty.

(1.) Exciting people to their duty. Observing negligence, they ought to stir up people to their duty; e. g. those that neglect family-prayer, secret prayer, attending regularly on ordinances, or are negligent of their soul's state any way, they should drop a word to stir them up.

(2.) Rebuking sin. Reproofs of wisdom are as necessary for church-members as salt is to keep meat from corrupting. It is necessary to discourage sin and wickedness in the church, which should be a holy society. And there wants not occasion for this, in swearing, lying, profaning the Sabbath, drunkenness, strife, variance, and whatsoever is contrary to the rules of the gospel.

(3.) Warning such as they see in hazard of sin; to tell them of the snare, their hazard and danger, and so to prevent people's falling in to it, as far as lies in their power. Sometimes people may be discerned staggering, and a word then duly put into their mind may, by the blessing of God, keep them from falling.

(4.) Comforting those that are cast down, and strengthening the weak. It was the practice of holy Job, chap. 4:4. 'Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble

knees.' And church-rulers ought always to have a special eye upon those that are the weak and distressed in Christ's flock, to labour to support them in the Lord.

(5.) Instructing and informing them privately. And indeed rule without instruction is dumb, and not agreeable to the way of our Lord's governing his house; and excitations, rebukes, &c. can never be rightly managed without information of the mind. For if we would gain our end in dealing with people, we must not think it enough to tell them their duty or their sin, but by reasoning with them to convince their consciences.

These things are the duty of all church-members, however little it is laid to heart. Only what others are bound to by the common band of Christianity, we are bound to by our office, Lev. 19:17. 1 Thess. 5:14.

3. They are to visit the sick, and should be sent for, for that end, James 5:14, 15. But otherwise discretion and christian love may engage them to go even when they are not sent for. They ought to pray with them and for them. And, by the same reason, they are to counsel, instruct, and comfort them, according to the grace bestowed on them, and as they see the party's case does require. This would be a means to render the office more esteemed than, alas! it is with many. And it needs not hinder the pastor's visits.

4. They are to concur with the pastor in the exercise of discipline, according to the word of God, and the constitutions of the church agreeable thereto. For ministers and elders make up that church, having the power of censures, Matth. 18:17. And thus they are to delate scandalous persons to the judicatory, either when their private admonitions will not do, or where the offence is in its own nature public, and cannot be passed with private admonition. And in the managing of matters in the judicatory, they are not only to give their opinion and vote according to their light, but to reason the matter calmly, for the finding out of the best expedient. Admission to, and debarring from, the sacrament of the Lord's supper, is a weighty

piece of this work, belonging to the kirk-session, wherein all tenderness, caution, and wisdom should be used, to separate as far as we can betwixt the precious and the vile, that holy things be not cast to dogs.

As for the collecting and distributing of the church's money, it is so far from being the main work of ruling elders, that it is no part of their work as elders at all, but belongs to the deacons, which is an inferior office. But the superior offices of the church including the inferior ones, the elders may do it, and must do it, where there are not deacons.

II. I come now to show, what it is to discharge the duties of that office well.

1. It is to discharge it faithfully, 1 Cor. 4:2. It is a great trust the master puts us in, and we must act in it with that faithfulness to our own souls, and to the souls of those who are under our charge, as our conscience may not have wherewith to reproach us.

2. Diligently, Rom. 12:8. The slothful servant that closeth his eyes, and gives up his watch, will never be approved of God. Be diligent in your duty, and it will not want its reward.

3. Zealously, Psal. 69:9. Zeal for the master's honour, and advancing the kingdom of Christ in real holiness, and suppressing the devil's kingdom in sin and wickedness, in the congregation, and otherwise as we have access, is well becoming church-officers especially.

4. Prudently, Matth. 24:45: Church-officers had need to join the wisdom of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove. And they will find it necessary many a time to sweeten with prudent management the bitter pills they must give, Gal. 6:1.

III. I proceed to shew, what is that honour that people owe to their ruling elders.

1. They ought to esteem and respect them for their work's sake, 1 Thess. 5:12, 13. Their work is honourable, their Master whom they serve in that work is great, and the advantage of their work redounds to the church. People's esteem of them is but a necessary encouragement to them in the work they have undertaken, without any prospect of worldly advantage. And if people esteemed the Lord's work, they would even esteem the workers too.

2. Obedience and submission to them in their doing the work of their office, Heb. 13:17. If it be their duty to watch over you, excite and admonish you, &c. ye ought not to account them meddling in what belongs not to them, when they inquire into your way. Ye ought to fall in with the duties they excite you to; meekly to receive their rebukes, admonitions, and warnings; honourably to receive their consolations, as those that have a commission from the Lord; and heartily to receive their good admonition and counsel; and subjecting yourselves as Christ's subjects to the discipline of his house.

3. They ought to pray to God for them, 1 Thess. 5:15. It is a great work we have in hand, and your interest is concerned in our right discharge of it; which therefore should make you to give us a share in your prayers.

4. Shutting your ears against reproaches cast on them, and being backward to receive ill reports of them, staving them off, unless there be sufficient evidence, 1 Tim. 5:19. Church-officers are those whom Satan mainly aims to discredit, and therefore stirs up rotten-hearted hypocrites, false brethren, and a profane generation, to cast reproach upon them, that so their work may be marred in their hands, religion despised, and sinners hardened.

Use 1. As to you that are already in this honourable office, and you that are now to be ordained to it, I exhort you to labour rightly to discharge your duty. To press this exhortation, I offer the following motives.

Mot. 1. Consider it is a sacred office in the house of God, to which God has called you; and therefore let us together take that exhortation, Acts 20:23. 'Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.' The office is honourable in itself, however the world may esteem it. David though a king, would have thought it no disparagement to him, when he said, 'A day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness,' Psal. 84:10. But it has work annexed to it; and being sacred, it is not to play with. Labour to approve yourselves to your Lord and Master.

Mot. 2. Ye have thereby a fair occasion to be serviceable to God and to advance Christ's kingdom, and suppress that of the devil, in the congregation. And O what should we not do to do good to souls? Jam. 5:20. 'Let him know, that be which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.' I think that now, of a considerable time, I and my brethren of the eldership might have said, 'The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build the wall,' Neh. 4:10; and it has gone near to the sinking of some of our spirits. But now that God has inclined the hearts of so many to come over and help us; if we take courage in our Master's work, to ply it faithfully, diligently, zealously, and prudently, and the Lord bless us with unity among ourselves, and real zeal for his honour, to put to our shoulders jointly to the work, we may hope, by the blessing of God, to see a more promising face on this congregation, sin more discouraged, and piety more increased.

Mot. ult. You and I must give an account to our great Master, how we have carried ourselves in this work, Heb. 13:17. If we be faithful we shall not want our reward from the chief Shepherd, who will give us a crown of life. If we be unfaithful, woe will be unto us for betraying our trust.

I give you a few advices.

1. Remember always that it is God whom ye have to do with. This will make you little to regard men's feud or favour, if ye do your work agreeable to God's will.
2. Study to act in dependence on the Lord; for he sends none-a warfare on his own charges. Eye his promised assistance, when ye set about your work.
3. Labour to believe, that the way of uprightness and faithfulness is the sure way. 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him,' Prov. 16:7. 'He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flat-tereth him,' Prov. 28:23. Let men's corruptions say what they will, their consciences will speak in favour of faithful dealing.
4. Watch over your own persons, that in your personal walk ye be blameless and exemplary, 1 Tim. 3:1, 2, 3. If ye be untender in your walk, ye will do more hurt than ye can do good. Being honoured to be governors in the house of a holy God, ye must be holy as the master is holy; tender in your words, circumspect in your actions, and therefore watchful over your hearts.
5. Watch over your families. Every one that has a family is obliged to this, and you in a special manner, 1 Tim. 3:4, 5. The sinful practices of those of your family will reflect a peculiar dishonour on you, and by you on your Lord and Master. Therefore your families should be a church wherein God is to be duly worshipped morning and evening; and good discipline kept up by admonition, reproof, and watchfulness.
6. Ye must watch over one another, each over his fellow-elders, knowing, that any thing scandalous in one of the society reflects a dishonour on the whole, and by them on the Lord himself. And if ye be not careful on that side, there will be little good of your watching

over the flock. And therefore strict discipline among yourselves is absolutely necessary.

USE II. As to you the people, I would exhort you to make conscience of your duty towards your officers. Alas! for the little conscience that is made of that among us. I am sure we may and matter of mourning this day in that matter.

Instead of honouring them, many despise and pour contempt on them, more than otherwise they would do; thus vilely treating their sacred office.

Instead of submission and obedience, what refractoriness and spurning of discipline for scandalous offences! Some cannot endure to be told of their faults; but if we admonish or reprove them, even privately, they are made worse instead of better; and rather than take a reproof, they will give up with ordinances.

Instead of being careful of their reputation, some will bawl out upon them, and abuse them on every occasion. And there is nothing with many more readily received, than the vomit of malicious and spiteful spirits against ministers and elders, which is greedily licked up, 1 Cor. 4:13.

Hence it is, that men's hands are weakened, and they are discouraged in their work, while they see the people of that temper, Hos. 4:4. And hence it is, that it is so very hard to get men to undertake the office of elders; for they see that if they engage therein, they must be the very butt of the malice and spite of bitter spirits; and that if they will be faithfull, they engage themselves in a fighting life, and that the stream will go against them. But allow me to put you in mind of three things.

1. Whose part you act in that matter. It is the part of Satan against these men and yourselves too. Can you fall upon a more expedite way to advance the kingdom of the devil in the congregation, than to discourage and weaken the hands of those that are set over you in the

Lord? Is there a fairer way to rout the army, than to make their leaders useless?

2. Whose servants they are. They are clothed with a commission from the King of the church; and the contempt poured on them reaches to their Master; 'He that despiseth you (says he), despiseth me,' Luke 10:16. Will the laws of the land avenge the affronts done to a petty officer, who comes to execute the sentence of a civil court? did David severely avenge on the Ammonites the maltreating of his servants, whom he sent on a congratulatory message to them as ye find in 2 Sam. 10? and will not the Lord Jesus resent in his wrath the maltreatment of those that are clothed with his commission?

3. Lastly, Are ye not the professed subjects of the kingdom of Christ? Why then will ye not submit yourselves to the laws of his house? Why will ye not be obedient in the Lord to those whom he sets over you, complying with their exhortations, admonitions, and rebukes? Luke 19:27. Why do not ye strengthen their hands in the Lord's work? If ye have any interest in Zion's King, it is the work of our common Lord, which you are obliged to in a private way, as well as they by virtue of their office; and therefore ye are bound to co-operate with them in what serves to promote the interest of that King, whose servants ye profess to be.

I proceed now to consider the relation between political fathers and their children; that is, magistrates and subjects.

First, I shall shew the duty of subjects to magistrates.

1. They owe them singular respect and honour, 1 Pet. 2:17 They are to be honoured by us in our hearts, thinking of and esteeming them reverently and carrying a reverent fear and awe of them within our breasts, 1 Sam. 26:16, 17. Prov. 24:21. And this is to be expressed in a respectable behaviour towards them in word and deed.

The grounds of this are specially two. (1.) The ordinance of God, whereby they are set above us in the way of power and authority,

Rom. 13: and subjects ought to walk in a conscientious regard to the superiority that God has given their rulers over them. (2.) The image of God that shines in their dominion and eminency above their subjects, Psal. 82:6. They are God's vicegerents on earth, whose office bears a representation of God's dominion.

2. Subjects owe them the charity to construct the best of their actions that they will bear, and to beware of passing a rash judgment of their administrations. Notable is the instance of it in David, 1 Sam. 26:19. 'Now therefore, I pray thee, let my Lord the king hear the words of his servant: if the Lord have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the Lord; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go serve other gods.' The liberty that many take in speaking of magistrates, and wresting their actions still to the worst side, is what proceeds not from the spirit of the gospel, but is contrary to the word, an effect of their own pride and presumption, Exod. 22:28. Eccl. 10:20. 2 Pet. 2:10. Jude. 8. This is also highly reasonable, and hath these grounds. (1.) That candour and charity we owe to all men, but in a special manner to our superiors, requires it, 1 Cor. 13:5, 7. (2.) Our unacquaintedness with the springs of public business, secrets of government, and reasons of state, Prov. 25:3. And natural modesty, as well as religion, teaches men not to answer a matter before they hear it, Prov. 18:13. This dutiful children will allow to their parents, wives to their husbands, servants to their masters, and inferiors to their superiors; and why should not magistrates have it too?

3. Subjection, loyalty, and obedience to their just laws and commands. It is bad religion where loyalty to the magistrate must stand in place of all religion towards God, but it is also bad religion where people's pretended religion towards God justles out their loyalty to the magistrate, Rom. 13:5. This duty Papists exempt churchmen from; and no wonder, for it is a part of the character of Antichrist, 2 Thess. 2:4; but the scripture subjects ministers to the

magistrates, as having souls as well as others, Rom. 13:1. 'Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.'

4. The payment of their tribute, Rom. 13:6, 7. This is a debt of thankfulness, and justice too, for the benefits of government which the subjects enjoy, without which the government cannot be supported, but all would go into confusion.

5. Defending them in danger, each one according to his station, 2 Sam. 18:3. 1 Sam. 26:15.

6. Lastly, Prayer to God for them; supplications for supply of wants, prayers for good things to them, intercessions for turning away of evil from them, and thanksgivings for mercies bestowed on them, 1 Tim. 2:1, 2. There is a reason for it too; for the welfare of subjects is wrapt up in theirs, ib. Much depends on their management, God's honour, our own good; and their high place has many dangers, difficulties, snares, and temptations.

USE. Let me therefore exhort you in the words of the apostle, 1 Pet. 2:13, 14. 'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.' Let us honour and dutifully subject ourselves, according to the will of God, to our gracious Sovereign King George, our rightful and lawful King by virtue of the laws of Scotland, pointed at in the claim of right, and upon which was founded the late happy Revolution. Let us adore that bountiful providence, by which his grandfather [Frederick Elector Palatine of the Rhine], having lost one kingdom [that of Bohemia], besides his private estate, in the cause of the Protestant religion, three kingdoms are now conferred on the grandson. Let us thank our God, who did so seasonably bring him to the throne, and that in peace, to the surprise of all parties, so as we were like men that dreamed. Let us suppose that the Popish Pretender had effectuated his purpose, what a case had we been in this day! Yet rejoice with trembling; it is hard to say

that Heaven and these sinful nations are become friends yet. Let us be dutiful to subordinate magistrates under him, and honour those whom God has honoured by their office, saying to them, Ye are gods. Let us not stumble atheists, Jacobites, and malignants, against our holy religion, by contempt of the magistrate. We read the Bible, where subjection is commanded to subjects oft and again, even to magistrates that were enemies to Christianity. We are the followers of that Jesus who paid his tribute, and taught the people of the Jews, who were more solemnly covenanted with God, and more strictly bound up in the choice of their kings, than any nation under heaven, yet not to deny their tribute to Cæsar, the Heathen Roman emperor, who then was their chief magistrate, Matth. 22:19–21.

Secondly, I shall shew the duty of magistrates to their subjects', which I shall only name.

1. They ought to establish good laws among their subjects, and to see them duly executed, Zech. 8:16. 2 Chron. 19:5, 6, 7.
2. To govern them with wisdom, justice, and clemency, 2 Chron. 1:10.
3. To punish evil-doers, and encourage them that do well, Rom. 13:3.
4. To protect them, and provide for their common safety, 1 Tim. 2:2; to see to their prosperity, and not to oppress them, Prov. 28:16.
5. Lastly, They ought to promote true religion, and advance the interest of Christ's kingdom among their subjects, Isa. 49:23. Some will have the magistrate to be the fountain of church-power. Others leave him nothing to do in religion but to defend the church, and execute her acts. Thus go the Papists. Truth goes the middle way, allowing the magistrate a cumulative, though not a privitive, power in church-matters; and though he ought not to exercise a spiritual function, yet he can command and oblige ministers and other church-officers to do their duty, authoritatively call them to do it. And this is no more to usurp church-power, than a minister's

charging magistrates from the word, is to usurp civil power. See Confession of Faith.

There are other relations that import a mere preference; as, betwixt the aged and the younger, the weaker in gifts and the stronger, and between equals.

First, As to the relation betwixt the aged and the younger,

1. I shall consider very briefly the duties of the younger to the aged, for these are fathers and mothers in scripture-language, 1 Tim. 5:1.

(1.) They ought to submit to them, so as to follow their wise advice, and not to stand upon points with them, but be ready to yield to them, where lawfully it may be done, 1 Pet. 5:5.

(2.) They ought to honour them, and carry respectfully to them. The Ancient of days, commands us to honour old age, Lev. 19:32.

2. The aged ought, (1.) To be ready to profit the younger sort by their good advice, to tutor them, as Eli did young Samuel, 1 Sam. 3:9. (2.) To give them the example of a virtuous and holy life, Tit. 2:2.

Secondly, The duties of the weaker in gifts to the stronger are,

(1.) To reverence and respect them for the gifts of God in them, Gen. 45:8. (2.) To be willing and ready to learn of them. (3.) To beware of judging harshly of them in things wherein they have a greater liberty than they, Rev. 14:3.

The duties of the stronger in gifts are, (1.) To communicate cheerfully to them what God has given them, and so to help them by their gifts. (2.) To encourage them, and bear with their infirmities, Rom. 15:1.

Lastly, The duties of equals are, (1.) To regard the dignity and worth of each other, and carry respectfully to them, 1 Pet. 2:17. (2.) To carry modestly towards one another, preferring in honour each other,

Rom. 12:10. (3.) To endeavour after and rejoice in one another's welfare as their own, ver. 15, 16.

II. I proceed now to shew, what is forbidden in the fifth commandment. According to our Catechism, it forbids 'the neglecting of, or doing any thing against the honour and duty which belongeth to every one in their several places and relations.

This question, is a field as large, or rather larger than the former, in so far as to one duty several sins are opposed: but fearing that ye cannot bear enlargement, having heard so much already on these relations, I shall contract my discourse on this into a very narrow compass.

This command is broken, (1.) By neglect of the duties we owe to our relations, which ye have heard. (2.) By doing any thing against and contrary to these duties.

First, Husbands and wives break this command, and sin against one another, many ways. As particularly,

1. Against that tender conjugal love they owe to one another, is all unkindness, whereby, laying aside, and divesting themselves of natural affection, they are surly to, careless of, and unconcerned for their relatives, or their comfort. Of this sort are their bitter speeches, reproaching and reviling one another. That selfishness, whereby they are at no pains to please one another in lawful things, and void of sympathy in one another's joys and griefs; unreasonable suspicions and jealousies, whatever be done to please them; blazing abroad their own shame, in speaking to the discredit of their relatives; contempt of and despising one another. All these are quite opposite to conjugal love.

2. Against that faithfulness they owe to one another, in respect of their bodies, is infidelity in the gross breach of the marriage-contract, deserting and leaving one another, and defrauding one another. In respect of their means, is all idleness, mismanagement,

and wastery; and in respect of their souls, is unconcernedness about them, being at no pains to instruct, admonish, and watch over one another; and if at any time they tell them of their faults, it is to their reproach, being before others, or in their passion, so that it can do no good. And much more when they become snares and hinderances to one another, instead of meet helps, leading and provoking their relatives to sin against God, and ruin their own souls.

Wives particularly sin against their husbands, by casting off all reverence to them, carrying themselves imperiously towards them, being disobedient, wilful, and untractable, and, like Vashti, Esth. 1:10, 11, 12 who would not come to the king, when sent for by him, will not go an inch by their own will to please them. It is not their honour to command, whose province God has made it to obey, Ezek. 16:30. Eph. 5 ult.

Husbands sin against their wives in dealing untenderly with them, tyrannizing and domineering over them in a masterful way, not protecting them, from the insults of others, nor providing for them; giving them that are their wives no trust, but making them, like Nabal, accountable to the utmost farthing; nor encouraging and praising them when they do well; most of all in beating them, a thing in use only with furious or mad men, Eph. 5:25, 29.

Secondly, As to parents and children:

1. Children sin against their parents by disobedience to them. Such are in the midst of the black roll, Rom. 1:30 and are in a near way to ruin, Prov. 30:17. So do they by all irreverence to them, and slighting and dishonouring them in word and deed, Deut. 27:16 and much more by cursing them, Exod. 21:17. Many, again, sin against God and their parents, being unteachable, and will not hearken to their instruction, Prov. 5:7 they will not take a sharp word from them, but their hearts rise against them and it too, Prov. 13:18 and others, though they will bear with words, yet they are stubborn, and will not submit to correction, Deut. 21:18, 19. And what will we say of those

that, like cursed Ham, make a jest of their parents' infirmities, waste their substance, and prove unnatural and hard-hearted to them when they are old and in distress? Prov. 19:26. Finally, they sin by disposing of themselves to callings, or in marriage, without consent of their parents, Gen. 26:34, 35.

2. Parents sin against their children many ways, while they are not concerned for them while infants; but many are careless as to the bringing up of their children to some honest employment, but, by encouraging them in idleness, prove a snare to them. Most men, if they bring their children to be able to shift for a livelihood to themselves, think they have done enough, while they have not been at pains to bring them up for God. Many will learn them to work that will not learn them to read, pray, &c. What shall we say of those that will learn them to ban, swear, lie, pick, and steal, and encourage them in such things? Some kill their children by cockering them; they indulge them fondly to their ruin. And how indiscreetly will parents dote on one child by another, where it is not grace but mere fancy, that makes the difference? Gen. 25:28. Some, on the other hand, are wofully harsh to their children, and break their spirits, by holding them so short by the head that they are driven to extremities, using them as drudges rather than as children, immoderately beating them when they are in a fault, and inveighing against them with bitter words, Col. 3:21 indiscreet and untender dealing with them with respect to their callings or marriages.

Thirdly, As to masters and servants;

1. Servants sin against their masters by irreverent, disrespectful, and saucy carriage towards them, without any respect to the honour which God calls them to give to their masters. Many are disobedient, and will plainly tell, that they will not do what they are bidden; or if they do it, they will do it in such a manner, as shall vent their pride and passion. Though the scripture commands not to answer again, they will answer, and have the last word too, and by no means will submit to reproofs. Many are unfaithful to their masters, their

service is eye-service, unfaithful service, either by their negligence and sloth bringing their master to loss, or by dishonesty in that which is under their hands. Some professing servants are by their way a scandal to religion in families where they are. Others are a plague to the family by the aversion they shew to every good thing or religious duty, as if their masters were no more concerned in them, if they work their work, Eph. 5:5, 6.

2. Masters sin against their servants, not allowing them sufficient maintenance, but niggardly pinching them, keeping back their wages from them in whole or in part, and so oppressing the hireling; rigorously keeping them at work, not allowing them convenient time for rest, nor worshipping of God in secret, or attending on public ordinances. And so they sin against them by continual chiding, and uneasiness to them, and carelessness with respect to their soul's good, Eph. 6:9.

Fourthly, As to ministers and people:

1. People sin against their ministers by their slighting and despising them, and nowise treating them as the messengers of Christ; going on in their evil ways over the belly of all warnings and reproofs, being stubborn, and refusing subjection to discipline; slandering them, creating them trouble, by forsaking ordinances, &c. or any wise making their work burdensome, or them to drive heavily in it; and restraining prayer for them.

Ministers sin against people by an unconcernedness about their souls' case, laziness, and unfaithfulness in discharge of their duty, proving stumbling-blocks to their people by a loose walk, and not being earnest in prayer for them, for the blessing of God on them and their message.

As to ruling elders and people, I have nothing to add to what I said before.

Fifthly, As to magistrates and subjects:

1. Subjects sin against magistrates by carrying disrespectfully to them, rebelling against them, and disobeying their just laws, reviling and speaking despitefully of them, denying them subjection and their just dues, and not praying for them.

2. Magistrates sin against subjects by using their power to satisfy their lusts, and giving bad example to others, by tyranny and oppression, unjust laws, and discountenancing piety and virtue, and opposing themselves to the kingdom of Christ.

Sixthly, As to the aged and younger: How little respect do the younger shew to the aged! Instead of that honour due to age, people are ready to befool them, if not to count them witches or wizards, forgetting that either they must come to their age themselves, or die by the way. On the other hand, few old people carry so to the younger, as to command respect by their exemplary piety and holiness; but, on the contrary, grey hairs are often found in the way of wickedness.

Seventhly, As to the weaker and stronger in gifts: It is often the sin of the weaker to envy the stronger, and if they can to misrepresent them. The weak judge the strong, and the strong despise and stumble the weak.

Lastly, Equals sin against one another, undervaluing the worth, envying and grieving at the good of one another, and usurping preeminence over one another.

The spring and source of all this is, (1.) Want of love to and fear of God; for while people are not in their duty to God, how should they be in their duty to man? (2.) Pride and selfishness, while every one seeks himself, and not the good of others.

These things may be very humbling to all of us. Who can say his life is clean in any of these relations? But even those who are very dutiful in their several relations as to the matter, may be guilty of the breach of this command, in so far as what they do in these things does not

proceed from gracious principles; for indeed the first command must be carried along in all the rest.

III. We come now to the reason annexed to this command; which is, 'A promise of long life and prosperity (as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good) to all such as keep this commandment.'

This is a promise to encourage the conscientious performance of the duties here required. The apostle tells us, that it is 'the first command with promise,' Eph. 5:2.

Quest. 1. How is this command the first with promise, seeing the second is a promise also?

Ans. It is the first command of the second table: for it is the most weighty of them all, as comprehending all the rest in it; so that we cannot sin against the rest, but we must first break over the hedge of this, which encompasseth all the rest. For one cannot violate another's life, chastity, &c. but he first violates the honour due to him by this command. And it is the only command that has a special promise of a particular mercy annexed to it. The promise annexed to the second command is but a promise of mercy in the general, and that not particularly to those that keep that command, but all the commandments.

Quest. 2. But does the law promise any thing but to perfect keeping of its commands? and if so, what are we the better?

Ans. We must distinguish betwixt the law as a covenant of works, and the law as in the hand of Christ for a rule of life to believers. As it is a covenant of works, nothing less than perfect obedience can interest men in the promise; for the least failure knocks off the man's fingers from the promise, by virtue of the curse, Gal. 3:10. 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' So that we can be nothing the better of this promise. But Christ being the Surety of the better covenant,

having made a new covenant of grace in his blood, he takes the same law in his hands, and gives out the commands of it as a rule of life to his covenanted people, and renews the promises of it to their sincere obedience of them, 1 Tim. 4:8. 'Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' As for the curse of it they hear of it no more, he having borne it away himself. And so he crowns the fruits of his own grace in them with blessed rewards. And as all these promises are yea and amen in him; so for his sake, through faith in his blood, they are obtained.

In the words we may consider these three things; the blessing promised, the place where it is to be enjoyed, and the regard the Lord allows his people to have to that blessing to further them in obedience.

FIRST, The blessing promised; that is, long life, that thy days may be long. It is a temporal mercy, a mercy much desired ordinarily by all men, and promised to them that keep this commandment. There are four things here to be considered.

First, What is meant by men's days being long. It denotes two things.

1. Long life, Prov. 4:10. 'The years of thy life shall be many.' Death in its best colours has something frightful about it. It is a dissolution of soul and body, which nature shivers at. But there is no eviting of it; all must die; they must go through that dark valley to their eternal state. But the best that can be made of it is promised here, viz. that such shall be full of days, and not be taken away till they be ripe for the sickle.

2. Prosperity to accompany that life; for non vivere, sed valere, vita est. Long life in miseries is a continued death, rather than life. So that the nature of the thing teaches us, that a prosperous long life is here promised. It is a good old age, Gen. 15:15. And thus the apostle explains it, Eph. 6:3. 'That it may be well with thee, and thou mayst live long on the earth.'

Secondly, That long life is in itself a mercy, and therefore is promised. There are many things that may mortify men's desires of long life. Old age is ordinarily accompanied with a train of miseries; and the longer the godly live, they are the longer kept out of heaven. Yet there are four things that make this long and prosperous life here promised to the godly's keeping of this commandment, a great mercy.

1. A good old age is an honourable thing, Prov. 6:31. 'The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.' God commands a particular reverence to be given to old men, Lev. 19:32. 'Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man.' It is true, sin and wickedness spoils the greatest glory, and no man is more like the devil than a wicked old man, Isa. 65:20. 'The sinner being an hundred years old, shall be accursed. But it is an honourable character which the Spirit of God puts on Mnason, Acts 21:16. 'An old disciple.' And old godly men are most like God, Dan. 7:9. Rev. 1:14.

2. It is profitable for the exercise of godliness, in so far as it makes them proof against many temptations which youth often carries men headlong unto, 2 Tim. 2:22. The frothiness and fire of youth dying out through time, their grace is the better it wants them. Young people's grace may be more bulky, but old people's grace, though of less bulk, is more worth, because it is more solid. Though new liquor may work and swell up more, the old is better. John was the oldest of the apostles, and last of them who wrote. In his younger years he could have burnt whole towns for Christ, Luke 9:54 but if ye will look to his epistles written in his older days, they breathe nothing but love, meekness, and solid godliness.

3. Long life makes way for the more proofs and experiences of the goodness of God on the earth, 1 John 2:13. The young soldier may be more mettled and venturous; but the old soldier is more to be trusted, because of his experience and skill. It is no small advantage to have been an eye-witness of the several appearances God has

made for his church, and of several storms that have gone over her head.

4. Lastly, They have the better opportunity of glorifying God here, and being serviceable in their generation, the longer they live on the earth; and therefore shall have a larger measure of glory hereafter, as they have been more serviceable for God than others, 2 Cor. 9:6; How many are cut off in their early days, while they were just budding for the honour of God and the service of the church! It is better for themselves that they are soon taken away; but the church is less the better of them, Phil. 1:23, 24. The Spirit of God takes notice of this in the old men that outlived Joshua, how useful their age was for God and his church, Josh. 24:31. 'And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that over-lived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord that he had done for Israel.' And though glory is not the merit of good works, yet according to the sowing, so shall the harvest be.

Thirdly, A holy walk, particularly in the conscientious performance of relative duties, is the way to a long and prosperous life. Holiness, and particularly relative holiness, is the way to a long and happy life in the world.

1. As to holiness in general, it is clear from two things.

(1.) From the promise of God in his life-giving word. 'Man lives by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' The unbelieving world may think a scripture-promise but a poor fence for a man's life. Give them good entertainment, ease, medicine, they will lay more weight on these than on a cluster of promises; but yet a promise from the Lord is better than all these, Dan. 1:15; for 'man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,' Matth. 4:4. Now, it has the promise, 1 Tim. 4:8. It has the promise of health, wealth, and long life, Prov. 3:7–10, and 16.

(2.) From the nature of the thing. A holy walk keeps us back from those things that hurt and ruin the body. And no man's body is so little abused to its hurt as his whose soul has respect to walk within the hedge of God's precepts. Drunkenness and gluttony devours more than the sword doth. Covetous care and anxiety wastes the body. Inordinate affections are the consuming of the constitution. Holiness, that represses these things, must then be as health to the flesh, Prov. 4:22.

2. As for dutifulness to our relatives: Consider,

(1.) It hath God's promise for it in the text, which hath been made out to many in their sweet experience, as in the case of Ruth, and that of the Recabites, Jer. 35:19. And so the contrary is threatened, Prov. 30:17. 'The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it;' and has been fulfilled in many to the full extent.

(2.) Dutifulness of that sort procures the blessing of relatives; it natively draws out their hearts in thankfulness to God for them, and in prayers to God for them, which under God is a mean to bring down a blessing upon them. The blessing of them that were ready to perish was not in vain to Job; it sprung up in a liberal increase.

(3.) Such persons are of a meek disposition, and such have a peculiar promise to inherit the earth, Matth. 5:6. It is the want of the spirit of meekness, and pride and selfishness in the room of it, that mars relative dutifulness.

4. Lastly, The nature of the thing leads to it; for that is the ready way to make relations comfortable; and the comfort that people find in their relatives does good like a medicine, while the contrary is as rottenness in the bones.

There are two objections that lie against this doctrine.

Object. 1. Have not wicked men, that cast off all personal and relative holiness, oft-times a long and prosperous life?

Ans. It is so indeed. Job observed it long ago, ch. 21:7 'Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?' But there is one thing that makes the difference wide enough; i. e. they have it not by promise. What of that? will ye say. There is very much in it. (1.) He cannot have the comfort of it as a godly man can have, no more than he can have the comfort of a well-furnished house, that knows not but every day he may be turned out of it, while he knows no where else to go, in comparison of one that has a tack of it, and is to move to a better when the tack expires. (2.) There is a secret curse in it that destroys and ruins him; so that the morsel may be fair, but there is a bone in it that will stick in his throat, Prov. 1:32, 33. (3.) Lastly, The last dish spoils the feast. No man can be said to live a long and happy life, that dies a miserable unhappy death, as all wicked men do. Can that life be prosperous and happy that has such a black hinder end? Does not death soon catch that man, that catches him ere his salvation be secured.

Object. 2. Are there not many godly people whose life in the world is neither long nor prosperous, and have neither much health, wealth, nor long life? The answer to this brings us,

Fourthly, To shew how this promise is to be understood. It is to be understood, as all other temporal promises are, not absolutely, as if in no case it could be otherwise; but with these two limitations: (1.) As far as it shall serve for God's glory; and God may be more glorified in their early death than their long life. The honour of God is the immoveable rule by which these things must be all measured. (2.) As far as it shall serve for their good; and so it may be a greater mercy to them to be hid in the grave, than to be left on earth; and surely it is no breach of promise to give one what is better than what was promised. And these two are not to be separated, but joined together; for whatever is most for God's honour, is most for the godly man's good. Now, upon this we may lay down these conclusions.

1. Upon this promise the godly, walking in the way of personal and relative holiness, may confidently expect from God as much long life and prosperity in the world as shall be for the honour of God, and their good to enjoy. And to have any more would be no favour.

2. A short and afflicted life would be more for their good than a long and prosperous one, Psal. 119:71. Isa. 57:1. And why should men quarrel with their blessings, or cast at their mercies? Good Josiah was soon taken away, because the Lord would not have him to see the evil that was coming on.

3. Many of the children of God may be guilty of such breaches of this command in the mismanagement of their relative duties, that they may, by their own fault, fall short of the mercy promised here in the latter, Psal. 99:8; and so need not wonder if they reap that correction which themselves have sowed. And though others, that have managed worse than they, may escape, no wonder either; for God will let that pass in another, because of an after-reckoning, when he will correct his own children for less, because, that is to put an end to the quarrel.

4. Lastly, Whatever they want of this, it shall be made up by what is better. The afflictions of the body shall be health to their souls; their crosses shall not be curses, but blessings; and if they be deprived of the residue of their years here, they shall get them made up in heaven.

SECONDLY, The place where that blessing is to be enjoyed; in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee; that is, the land of Canaan. So it respects the Jews. But as it respects Christians, it refers to any place of God's earth; and so the apostle turns it, Eph. 6:3. 'That thou mayst live long on the earth.'

LASTLY, That regard which the Lord allows his people to have to that blessing, to further them in obedience: Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord

thy God giveth thee. Though the chief motive to duty should be the honour and command of God, yet God allows as to eye the promised reward, even in temporal things, as a secondary motive and encouragement to duty.

USE. Let this recommend to us the living in dutifulness to our relatives. This is physic of God's appointment for the sick; it is the way to wealth of God's appointment for them that have little; it is the prolonger of life appointed by the Lord of life to those that would see many days, and these good. And there is no sure way to these where the appointment of God lies cross. Religion is the way to make the world happy. God has linked our duty and our interest together, so as there is no separating them. Relations are the joints of society; sin has disjointed the world, and so no wonder it he miserable; a relative holiness would set the disjointed world right again.

OF THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

EXOD. 20:13.—Thou shalt not kill.

THE scope of this command is the preservation of that life which God hath given unto man, which is man's greatest concern. No man is lord of his own or his neighbour's life; it belongs to him alone who gave it, to take it away. It is observable, that this and the three following commands are proposed in a word, not because they are of small moment, but because there is more light of nature for them than those proposed at greater length.

This command respects both our own life and the life of our neighbour. That it respects our neighbour, there can be no doubt; and as little needs there to be of its respecting our own. The words are general, agreeing to both; and so the sense of them is, Thou shalt not kill thyself, nor any other. He that said to the jailor, 'Do thyself no harm,' taught no other thing than what Moses and the prophets did say. Man is no more lord of his own life than his neighbour's; and he is in hazard of encroaching upon it, as well as that of another; and it is no where guarded, if not here. Nay, the sum of the second table being, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' whereby love to our neighbour is made the measure of love to ourselves, it is evident that it respects our own life in the first place.

As every positive command implies a negative, so every negative implies a positive. Therefore, in so far as God says Thou shalt not kill., viz. thyself or others, he thereby obliges men to preserve their own life and that of others. And seeing all the commands agree together, there can be no keeping of one by breaking of another; therefore the positive part of this command is necessary to be determined to lawful endeavours. Hence the answer to that,

Quest. 'What is required in the sixth commandment?' is plain, viz. 'The sixth commandment requireth all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life, and the life of others.' The duties of this command may be reduced to two heads. 1. The preserving of our own life. 2. The preserving the life of others. But both these are to be qualified, so as it be by lawful means and endeavours. For God has given us no such law, as for the keeping of one command we may or must break another. Only there is a great difference betwixt positive and negative precepts; the practice of positive duties may be in some cases intermitted without sin, as a man attacked in time of prayer, or on the Sabbath-day, may lawfully leave the prayer, and external worship of the day, to defend his life, Luke 14:5. But never may a man do an ill thing, be it great or little, though it were even to preserve his own life or that of others, Rom. 3:8. Is it a thing of which God has said, Thou shalt not do so and so? it must never be done, though a thousand lives depended upon it.

Hence it is evident, that a person may not tell a lie, nor do any sinful thing whatever, far less blaspheme, deny Christ or any of his truths, commit adultery or steal, though his own life, or the life of others, may be lying upon it. For where the choice is, suffer or sin, God requires and calls us in that case to suffer. And therefore the example of such things in the saints, as in Isaac, Rahab, &c. are no more propounded for our imitation, than David's murder, &c. Peter's denial of Christ, &c. And though we read not of reproofs given in some such cases, that will no more infer God's approbation of them than that of Lot's incest, for which we read of no reproof given him. The general law against such things does sufficiently condemn them, in whomsoever they are found.

Object. This is a hard saying. A man may be in the power of some ruffian, that will require on pain of death some sinful thing; and must one sell his life at such a cheap rate, as to refuse to deny his religion, drink drunk with him, lie, or do any such thing for the time:

Ans. It is no more hard than that, Luke 14:26. 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' We must love God more than our own or other's life, and so must not redeem it by offending God. Sin ruins the soul; therefore says our Lord, Matth. 10:28. 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.'

Object. In the case of martyrdom in the cause of Christ, it is very reasonable; but that is not the case.

Ans. That is a mistake. The case supposed is indeed the case of martyrdom in the cause of Christ. And I confidently aver, that whosoever suffers for the testimony of a good conscience, and because he will not break any one of the commands of God, is as true a martyr for the cause of Christ as he that dies on a gibbet for the maintenance of any of the articles of our creed. Is not holiness the cause of Christ? Has not a man in such a case the cause of martyrdom by the end? does he not lose his life for the sake of Christ? has he not the call to martyrdom, Suffer or Sin? may he not look for the martyr's reward? And if he redeem life by sinning, falls he not under the same dreadful doom, as in that case, Matth. 10:39. 'He that findeth his life, shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it,' Mark 8:38. 'Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.' Are not the ten commands Christ's words, as well as the articles of faith? Whatever difference may be betwixt these cases, an impartial consideration will manifest the case supposed is a greater trial of faith than the other. And God will surely make up to these secret unknown martyrs at the day of judgment, the honour which the open and manifest martyrs have before-hand.

In discoursing further from this subject, I shall shew,

I. What is required in this command.

II. What is forbidden in it.

I. I am to shew, what is required in this command. It requires, as I said before, 'All lawful endeavours to preserve our own life, or the life of others.'

FIRST, It requires, that, by all lawful endeavours, we preserve our own lives. Self-preservation is the leading duty of this command. Brute creatures have a natural instinct for it. Our kind God has given man a written law for it, whereby it may appear that we are dearer to our God than to ourselves. We may take up this in two things.

FIRST, Thou must preserve the life of thine own soul. When God says, Thou shalt not kill, doth he only take care for the body? No; doubtless of the soul too. He looks not to the cabinet only, overlooking the jewel. The soul is the man, at least the best and most precious part of him. Two things here are in general required.

1. The careful avoiding of all sin, which is the destruction of the soul, Prov. 11:19. It is by sin that men wrong their own souls; whereby they wound them, fill them with poisonous things, and prepare the way for their eternal death, Prov. 8 ult.

2. The careful using of all means of grace and holy exercises, for the begetting, preserving, and promoting spiritual life, 1 Pet. 2:2. As we must eat and drink for the life of our bodies, so must we use these for the life of our souls; eating Christ's body, and drinking Christ's blood, by faith, drinking in his word. The soul has its sickness, decays, &c. as well as the body. Let it not pine away, but nourish it.

SECONDLY, Thou must by all lawful endeavours preserve the life of thine own body. We may take up this in these three things.

1. Just self-defence against violence offered unto us by others unjustly, Luke 22:36. So a man ought to defend himself if he can,

against thieves or robbers; and therefore it is said, 'If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him,' Exod. 22:2. Yet this must be only in the case of necessity, where the violence cannot be escaped but by a violent repelling it; for all violent courses must be the last remedy, Luke 6:29. Where a soft reception will still the violence offered, it is not the spirit of Christ, but of Satan, that repels violence with violence. And when it is necessary, no greater violence may be offered than what is necessary to repel the attack, Exod. 2:2, 3:1.

2. Furnishing our bodies with whatever is necessary for their health and welfare, according to our ability; taking the moderate use of the means of health and life unto ourselves, Eph. 5:29 for in so far as we use not the means of preserving them, we are guilty of destroying them. Therefore it is our duty to allow ourselves a competent portion of meat and drink, wholesome food, as the Lord lays to our hands; to provide competent housing and clothing, to refresh our bodies with a competent measure of rest and sleep; to use moderate labour, exercise and recreations, and medicine for the removal of distempers. The use of these is necessary, and the immoderate use of them hurtful; therefore the moderate and temperate use of them is our duty.

3. Keeping our affections regular, subduing all inordinate and evil affections; for these are destructive to the body as well as to the soul. So that a patient disposition, a quiet mind, and a contented and cheerful spirit are duties of this command, as necessary for the welfare of our bodies; whereas inordinate passions are the ruin of them, Prov. 17:22. 'A merry heart doth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.'

SECONDLY, This command requires, that by all lawful endeavours we preserve the life of our neighbours. We may also take up this in two things.

FIRST, We must endeavour to preserve the life of their souls.

1. By giving them the example of a holy life, for that edifies and builds up, Matth. 5:16; whereas a scandalous walk is a soul-murdering practice.

2. By instructing, warning, reproof, and admonishing them as we have opportunity, where the case of their sin requires it, Jude. 23; and comforting them in distress, 1 Thess. 5:16; and praying for them, Gen. 43:29. No man must say with Cain, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' We are required to watch over one another. If our neighbour's ox or his ass fall into the ditch, we must also help them out: how much more when his soul is in hazard of falling into hell?

SECONDLY, We must by all lawful endeavours preserve the life of our neighbour's body. Here God requires of us,

1. To protect and defend the innocent against unjust violence, according to every one's power, as they have a fair call to exercise the same, whether it be in respect of their name, goods, or life, Psal. 82:3, 4. Prov. 24:11, 12. And so it is a duty of this command to repress tyranny, whereof we have commended example in the interposition of the people to save the life of Jonathan, 1 Sam. 14:45. 'And the people said unto Saul, shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not'.

2. To give unto others the necessities of life, when in want, according to our ability. For as he that feeds not the fire puts it out, so unmerciful people that shut up their bowels from the needy, are guilty of their blood before the Lord, James 2:15, 16.

3. To entertain such affections towards our neighbour, as may keep us back from injuring him, and him from doing harm to himself; such as charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness,

kindness. These are as water to quench fire in us which may burn up others, and as oil unto others to refresh them, Eph. 4 ult.

4. A peaceable, mild, and courteous conversation, Prov. 15:1 in looks, speech, and behaviour.

5. Lastly, With respect to injuries, we ought to take all things in the best sense, 1 Cor. 13:5, 7 to avoid all occasions of strife, yea, even to part sometimes with our right for peace as Abraham with Lot; to bear real injuries, Col. 3:12, 13; to forbear and be ready to be reconciled, and forgive injuries, yea, to requite good for evil, Matth. 5:44.

With respect to both our own life and the life of others, we are called to resist all thoughts, subdue all passions, avoid all occasions, temptations, or practices tending to the destruction of our own life, or that of others of soul or body.

Who can understand his errors? What shall come of us, if God enter into judgment with us? Our omissions would ruin us, even in those things where we judge ourselves to be in the least hazard.

II. I come now to shew what is forbidden in the sixth commandment. It forbids 'the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbour unjustly, and whatsoever tendeth thereunto.'

Here I shall consider this command as relating to our own life, and the life of our neighbour.

FIRST, I shall consider this command as relating to our own life; and that, 1. With respect to our souls; and, 2. With respect to our bodies.

FIRST, Thou shalt not kill thine own soul. Our kind God forbids us to be self murderers and soul murderers. We become guilty of the blood of our own souls these ways:

1. By neglecting the means of grace and salvation, Prov. 8:34, 36. The life of our souls is a flame that must be kindled from above, and fed

by means of grace. Whoso then neglect them, are guilty of their own blood. Consider this, ye prayerless persons, ye that are at no pains to get knowledge, slighers of public ordinances, private duties, reading, meditation, &c.

2. By opposing and fighting against the Lord's quickening work in the soul. They that murder convictions, murder their own souls, as if they were resolved that they should never stir in them, Prov. 29:1. Some, with Felix, put them off with fair promises; some, with cain, with the noise of axes and hammers; which is in effect, they will not let their souls recover.

3. By continuing in sin impenitent. God calls by his word and providence to the man, as Paul to the jailor, 'Do thyself no harm.' But, as if he were resolute on his own ruin, he will not forbear these courses. Wilful impenitency is the grossest self-murder, because soul-murder, Ezek. 18:30, 31. His soul is standing under a decayed roof, tell him that it will fall on him; but he will not stir a foot; is not his blood then on his own head?

4. By unbelief, and not coming to Christ by faith, John 5:40. Many means are essayed to preserve the soul; but still it is ruined, because the main cure is neglected. Let a man use ever so many remedies for his health, if he will not use the main cure necessary, he is his own murderer. So resolutions, watchings, engagements, are tried; but if faith, and employing Christ for sanctification, is not tried, he is still a murderer.

O sirs, consider this. Murder, self-murder, soul-murder, is a crying sin. What wonder the man perish, who will perish? Will God spare the shedding of the blood of that soul, which the man himself is so liberal of?

And hence see that people not only may, but this command of God obliges them to seek the welfare and good of their souls. Fear hell, hope for heaven; and let this stir you up to duty: but do not rest

there, go forward and make the love of God your main motive; and that of itself would be sufficient to stir you up to all the duties of a holy life.

SECONDLY, Thou shalt not kill thine own body. This is simply and absolutely forbidden. We may take away the life of others in some cases justly; but in no case our own, unless there be a particular divine warrant, which I suppose in Samson's case, which is not to be expected by us; for, therein he was a type of Christ. There are two things forbidden here.

1. The taking away of our own life, by laying violent hands on ourselves. This is the horrid sin of direct self-murder; of which Saul, Ahithophel, and Judas were guilty; and many sad instances of it have been of late. The law of God utterly condemns it, and nature itself abhors it. It is the effect of a desperate envenomed spirit, rising from pride and impatience, a horrible leaping into eternity ere the call come from God. It is highly dishonourable to God, charging him with cruelty, and refusing to wait his leisure. It is the thing the grand murderer is seeking. Civil laws strike against it; with us self-murderers are denied Christian burial, their goods are escheated, that respect to their families may deter people from it: in other places they have hung them up on gibbets. And though we will not take on us to determine the case of all such to be hopeless for eternity, that is sufficient to scare us, 1 John 3:5. 'Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.'

2. Doing any thing that tendeth thereunto. Men may be guilty of killing themselves indirectly many ways, all of which are here forbidden. Here are forbidden as tending to the murder of the body.

- 1st, All entertaining of any thoughts against our own life, that is heart-killing; wearying of our own life, and fretful wishing to be gone, as was Jonah's case, chap. 4:3; all tampering with temptations of that sort, and not rejecting them with abhorrence, Job 7:15. Our life is a mercy, and not to be wearied off fretfully; for it is God's

goodness that we are out of hell. And it is horrid ingratitude to account God's gift a burden.

2dly, Discontent, fretfulness, and impatience. It is a dangerous thing, Psal. 37:8. It was that which prevailed with Ahithophel to make away with himself. It is like ink cast into a fountain, which makes all the water blackish. It unfits for society with men, and for communion with God; it destroys the soul and body too; for the fretful man is his own tormentor. We should study to be content with our lot, and easy whatever our circumstances be, Heb. 13:5; and that will set all our wrongs right, Prov. 15:15; for then our spirit is brought to our lot; and the vulture preys no more on our liver.

3dly, Immoderate grief and sorrow. When we go into the waters of godly sorrow for sin, we are out again ere we are well in; but in carnal sorrow we will go over the head and ears, 2 Cor. 7:10. How many have conceived that sorrow upon some cross which they have met with! something within their fancy has been balked, that has ruined their bodies as well as their souls. We should enure ourselves to a patient bearing in the Lord's hand; and not smother that fire within our breasts, but lay it out before the Lord and leave it there, 1 Sam. 1:18 and labour to please God and consult our own welfare by a holy and moderate cheerfulness, Prov. 17:22.

4thly, Anxiety, distracting carking cares about the things of this life. As men fearing that they shall not sleep, do thereby mar their own rest; so the body is often ruined by too much anxiety for it, Matth. 6:31. 'Take no thought what ye shall eat, &c.' Gr. 'Rack not your mind.' When the mind is on the tenter-hooks, the body must smart for it. As the ape kills its fondling by hugging it, so do men kill themselves by indulging anxious cares. Let us labour then for a holy carelessness in these matters; let us use lawful means, and leave the success quietly on the Lord. Though anxiety will not add a cubit to our stature, it may through time take a cubit from it, Phil. 4:6.

5thly, Neglecting our bodies, Col. 2:23 when we do not make a convenient use of the means of life and health; as when people deny themselves the necessary measure of food, sleep, exercise, recreations, physic, clothes, and housing. People may be guilty against their own lives this way, (1.) By a careless negligent disposition, Eccl. 10:18. (2.) From the plague of a covetous pinching humour, that they cannot find in their heart to use the gift of God to them, Eccl. 6:2. (3.) By means of inordinate passions, 1 Kings 21:4. (4.) Sometimes Satan has driven people under convictions to this, suggesting to them that they have no right to these things. But as long as men live, though they have not a covenant-right, they have a common providential right to the means of life; and the command binds, Thou shalt not kill. It is a duty of this command, then, to take care of our bodies and provide them necessaries so far as we can: they are not ours, but God's.

6thly, Intemperance, when people keep no measure in satisfying the flesh, Luke 21:34. They pamper the flesh, till the beast turns furious, and ruins itself. When God made man, he impressed an image of his sovereignty on him, made him lord over the beasts; but now, without the beasts, and within the affections, are turned rebels. This is a monster with three heads.

(1.) Gluttony, intemperance in eating. Man should eat to live; but some, like the beasts, live to eat. The law of God will not allow people to cram their bellies, and sacrifice to a greedy appetite, Phil. 3:19. It is a degree of self-murder; for it cuts short people's days, which sobriety would prolong. There is a curse entailed upon it, which is often seen to take effect, Prov. 23:20, 21. 'Be not amongst wine-bibbers, amongst riotous eaters of flesh. For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.' The glutton and the drunkard, in scripture-language, is equivalent to a ne'er-do-well in ours, Deut. 21:20, 21. It is a beastly sin. A heathen calls the glutton's belly a swine's trough.

(2.) Drunkenness, intemperance in drinking, Luke 21:34. A sin that makes quick work for the grave, and has carried many thither ere they have lived half their days. Reason differences men from beasts, but the beastly sin of drunkenness takes away that, robbing men of reason. It is the devil's rack, on which while he has men, they will babble out every thing; for quod in corde sobrii, in ore ebrüi. It is an inlet to other sins: for what will a man not do in his drunkenness, if he have a temptation to it? It destroys a man's health, wealth and soul; murders soul and body at once. The Lacedæmonians used to fill their slaves drunk, that their children, seeing the picture of drunkenness might loath it. We have the picture of it, Prov. 23:29, &c. (1.) It embroils men in quarrels 'Who hath wo? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions?' Many have wo and sorrow that cannot help it; but drunkards wilfully create them to themselves. When drink is in, wit is out. Thence proceed drunken scuffles; babbling in scurrilous language; and from words they go to blows, wounds without cause. (2.) It ruins their bodies; redness of eyes, a sign of inward inflammation, through drink and watching, not through weeping and praying. (3.) It exposes them to uncleanness, ver. 33. 'Thine eyes shall behold strange women.' (4.) It makes their tongues ramble, speak contrary to religion, reason, common civility, yea, nonsense. (5.) It besots them; it makes their heads giddy, and they are fearless of danger, ver. 34. 'Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or he that lieth upon the top of a mast.' (6.) Lastly, It is a bewitching sin. The man sees the ill of it, but his heart is hardened, he has no power to leave it, ver. 35. 'They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not. When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.' The curse of God is entailed on it, Isa. 28:1, 2, 3, 'Wo to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine. Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under feet.'

(3.) Intemperance in any other sensual pleasure, Luke 8:14. The pleasures of the senses are often chains to the soul, and scourges to the body; and intemperance in them will make them so. Too much pleasing the body may make mourning at last, Prov. 5:11. A man may sin against God and his own body in the intemperate use of any sensual pleasure whatsoever, though in itself lawful; and no doubt much guilt is contracted in the intemperate use of tobacco, and such like things, 1 Cor. 6:12.

7thly, Immoderate labour and painfulness, Eccl. 2:22, 23. Labour and exercise in moderation is like a sober wind that purifies the air, and is good for the body and soul too: but immoderate labour and exercise is like a violent wind that throws down the house, and plucks up the tree by the roots.

Lastly, Exposing ourselves to unnecessary hazards, Matth. 4:7. To put ourselves in hazard where we have no call, is to sin against God and ourselves. And in this case, God desires mercy, and not sacrifice.

SECONDLY, We will consider this command as relating to our neighbour's life.

FIRST, Thou shalt not kill thy neighbour's soul. It is sin that is the killing thing both to our own and our neighbour's soul. And there are several ways how men fall into this guilt of murdering the souls of others. As,

1. By giving them an example of sin. God forbade to lay a stumbling-block before the blind; but the world is filled with these, and so ruined, Matth. 18:7. Men do ill things, and think that if they do ill, it is but to themselves. No; but thereby thou dost what lies in thee to ruin others.

Yea, example is not only ruining to others in evil things, but also, (1.) In doing what has the appearance of evil: therefore we should take heed to that, because others may take the appearance for reality, and so be ruined by us. (2.) By an uncharitable use of our Christian

liberty in things indifferent. Thus the strong may ruin the weak, Rom. 14:15.

2. By co-operating directly to the sin of our neighbour, which is indeed the lending of our destroying hand to ruin his soul, whereby his blood comes to be charged on us. It is the putting of a cup of poison in his hand to dispatch himself, and a reaching of the sword to the madman, which whoso do are accessory to his death. Thus men are guilty,

1st, By commanding others to sin, as Jeroboam made Israel to sin. So magistrates by sinful laws, and all superiors whatsoever, when they use their authority to oblige another to an ill thing; or whosoever commands another to do what is sinful.

2dly, By counselling others to it, or advising them in it. The world is full of these murderers. So that, where a person is under temptation, there is often at hand one like Jonadab to give counsel to some ill course, 2 Sam. 13:5. Such counsel often has the force of a command. So drunkards murder one another's souls, Hab. 2:15.

3dly, By joining with others in sin, Psal. 50:18. Going along with others in their sin, ruins not only ourselves, but them too.

4thly, By provoking others to sin, 1 Kings 21:25. Thus people are many ways guilty, by a provoking carriage, by provoking words; and not a few so devilish that they take a pleasure to provoke others, that they may get something to laugh at. These are like them who stir up the fire to burn another's house, that they may warm themselves at it.

5thly, By soliciting and downright tempting to sin. Such agents the devil has in the world, who make it their business to draw others to sin, by an ensnaring carriage or plain words; so that it is evident they are gone out on the devil's errand, Prov. 7:18.

6thly, By teaching sin. When men call truth a lie, and lies truth, when they give out a sinful practice to be duty, and a duty to be a sinful practice, they contribute directly to the sin of others, and bring that woe on themselves, Isa. 5:20. 'Wo unto them 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.'

By all these, two fall at once; for the sin of him that commands, counsels, &c. does not excuse the other.

(1.) By consenting to the sin of others, countenancing them in it, and encouraging them in their sin, Acts 9:1. We may countenance sinners in their duty, but by no means in their sin. These two are very different, but they are often confounded; and the confounding of them is the cause of much disorder in our church at this day.

3. By neglecting what we owe to our neighbour for the welfare of his soul. In not doing what we ought to preserve or recover his soul, we are guilty of destroying it, and so indirectly operate to his sin. As,

1st, By neglecting the means for preventing sin in others, Ezek. 3:18. When people do not teach, warn, and admonish, those whom they see to be in hazard, or generally neglect to restrain sin by all lawful means competent to them. Thus Eli sinned, 1 Sam. 3:13. 'His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.' Thus much guilt is contracted by ministers, magistrates, husbands and wives, parents, masters, &c.

2dly, By neglecting the means to recover those that have fallen into sin; suffering sin to lie on them, and not reproofing it, Lev. 19:17; compare 1 John 3:15; or reproofing them so imprudently, passionately, or weakly; as that it can do them no good. So did Eli.

3dly, By not compassionating the sinner, and mourning over his sin before the Lord, but hardening our hearts against him, and being careless what come of his soul, Ezek. 9:4. O what guilt is contracted this way in shutting up our bowels of compassion! How many will

exclaim against the sins of others, whose consciences witness that they never had a sore heart for the dishonour done to God, and the ill to the sinner's soul by it.

4thly, By being pleased with their sin. This is in effect to be pleased with their ruin, Rom. 1 ult. Thus men are guilty,

(1.) By approving the sin of others, Psal. 49:13. This is to set our stamp on an evil way, that it may pass current.

(2.) By rejoicing at it and making a jest of it. It is devilish mirth that riseth from our neighbour's ruining himself. Yet much of this guilt is in the world, Prov. 14:9.

SECONDLY, Thou shalt not kill thy neighbour's body unjustly. There are three cases wherein the life of our neighbour may be taken away justly. (1.) In the case of public justice, Gen. 9:6. (2.) Of lawful war, Judg. 5:23. (3.) Of necessary self-defence, Exod. 22:2, 3. The reason is, because in these cases a man does not take, but God, the Lord of life and death, puts the sword in his hand; so that judgment in these cases is the Lord's. Unless in these cases, it is murder, an unjust taking away another's life. Now, there are two things here forbidden with respect to this.

First, The taking away of our neighbour's life unjustly. This is actual and direct murder. This was the sin of Cain. This is a horrible and atrocious crime, for which men's laws condemn the guilty to the gallows, and God's laws condemn them to hell, 1 John 3:15. A sin so flat against nature, that even a natural conscience uses to kindle a hell in the bosom of the murderer; and a crime it is which Providence specially watches to bring to light. This is to be extended not only to what is commonly reckoned murder, but to these three cases.

1. The taking away of men's lives, under colour of law, and forms of justice, when the law is unjust, and there is no real crime; as in the case of Naboth, 1 Kings 21:12, 13, 19. And therefore all the laws of the

world will not free persecutors from the guilt of murder, in their taking away the lives of the martyrs.

2. The taking away of men's lives in an unjust war, Hab. 2:12. For in such a case an army is but a company of robbers and murderers before the Lord; seeing God puts not the sword in men's hands in an unjust cause.

3. The taking away of a man's life in a set duel or combat, which, whether it fall in the hand of him that gives the challenge, or his that accepts it, is downright murder. There is not the least sort of approbation thereof in the scriptures. And therefore the laws of duelling, like the laws of drinking, are not given by God, but by the devil. David's combating Goliath was by public authority, in a public cause, and besides, from an extraordinary impulse of the Spirit. Duelling is from the devil, as being the effect of pride and rage; a taking into men's heads the disposing of that life which God only is Lord of; it is an usurping of the magistrate's sword, and invading God's right of vengeance, Rom. 12:19; And the pretence of honour, the usual plea for duels, is as far different from God's laws of honour, as hell is from heaven, Prov. 16:32. Matth. 5:44.

Secondly, Whatsoever tendeth to the taking away of our neighbour's life unjustly. This is virtual interpretative, indirect murder. It is of several sorts, all here forbidden.

1. There is heart-murder; and of that there are several sorts.

1st, Carnal anger and wrath, which is rash, causeless, and excessive, Matth. 5:22. Some people's anger is like a fire in straw, soon blown up and soon out; others like a fire in iron, which it is hard to get laid. But of whatever sort it is, it is a short madness; and the longer it is kept, it is so much the worse, Eph. 4:26, 27. 'It resteth in the bosom of fools.' All murder begins here. It is a fire that kindles the anger of God, and of our neighbour, against us, and so casts all into

confusion. Let us study meekness; which is what will make us like to Christ, Col. 3:12.

2dly, Envy, whereby people grieve and grudge at the good of others. It is the devil's two-edged sword drawn to slay two at once; the envious himself, Prov 14:30; for he is like a serpent gnawing its own tail, Job 5:2; and the party envied, Prov. 27:4. While other sins are entertained for pleasure or profit, this is like a barren field, bringing forth only briars and thorns; there is not a dram of any sort of pleasure in it. But this was it that put Joseph's brethren on a murdering design. A charitable frame of spirit is our duty, Rom. 12:15.

3dly, Hatred and malice against our neighbour. This made Cain imbrue his hands in his brother's blood. And such as live in malice and hatred go in his way, 1 John 3:15. It is the sad character of persons estranged from God, that they are 'hateful, and hating one another,' Tit. 3:3. But of all hatred, that is the worst which hates good men for their goodness. However, we may hate every man's faults, but no man's person. 'Love thy neighbour as thyself,' is the express command of heaven.

4thly, Revengeful thoughts and desires; which are so much the worse as they are the longer entertained, Rom. 12:19. That heart is a bloody heart that longs for a heart-sight, as they call it, on those that have wronged them. God sees the most secret wish of ill to our neighbour, and will call us to an account. Let us learn long-suffering and patience, to forgive, a disposition and readiness to be reconciled; otherwise our addresses to Heaven for pardon will be vain, Matth. 4:15.

5thly, Rejoicing at the mischief that befalls others, Prov. 24:17, 18. Nothing makes men liker the devil than that murdering disposition to make the ruin of others our mirth, and their sorrow our joy; for man's sin and misery is what affords pleasure to the devil. We should

sympathize and weep with them that weep, as well as rejoice with those that do rejoice.

Lastly, Cruelty, an horrid unrelenting disposition, that is not affected with the misery of others, but carries it on, and adds to it with delight. A disposition most inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel, that teaches tender heartedness even to the very beasts, Prov. 12:10. But those that delight in cruel treating of these, want but an opportunity to exercise it on men.

2. There is tongue-murder. Solomon observes, that the tongue, however little a member it is, is the Lord of life and death, Prov. 18:21. and 21:23. If it be not well managed, then, no wonder it be sometimes found guilty of murder. The natural shape of the tongue resembles a flame of fire, and therefore in Hebrew one word signifies a flame and the tongue; yea, and it is what it seems to be, 'a fire, a world of iniquity,' Jam. 3:6. It resembles also a sword, and so it is oft-times, 57:4 and Psal. 59:7. The mouth and tongue resemble bow and arrow, and so they are, Psal. 64:3. The rage of an ill tongue must needs be dangerous, then, seeing such an one lays about him with his bow and arrow, and advances with fire and sword, which must needs bring him in blood-guilty. Now, this sword devours several ways.

1st, By quarrelling, provoking, and contentious speeches, Prov. 23:29. Such words have oft-times begun a plea that has ended in blood. And therefore the apostle compares such to beasts, that begin to snarl and bite one another, till it end in the ruin of either or both, Gal. 5:15. Let us make conscience, then, of peaceable, mild, and gentle speeches.

2dly, By bitter words. These are the impoisoned arrows that tongue-murderers shoot at their neighbour, Psal 64:3. 4. Their tongues are dipt in gall, and they pierce to the heart, and give a home-thrust like a sword, Prov. 12:28. They become not the disciples of the meek Jesus. Lay aside these as ye would not be reckoned murderers in the sight of God, Eph. 4:31.

3dly, By railing and scolding. This was Shimei's murdering deed, 2 Sam. 16:5, 6, 7 for which he died as a murderer in Solomon's days. Thus men and women manage their tongue-battles with eagerness, making their doors or the town-gate the field of battle, where words pierce like swords to the heart. These are the plagues and the pests of society, whose bloody mouths proclaim their hearts fearless of God. Hear ye what the Lord says, 1 Pet. 3:9. 'Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise, blessing: knowing that ye are thereunto called; that ye should inherit a blessing.'

4thly, By reviling, reproachful, and disdainful speeches. Men think little of these; they are but words, and words are but wind. But they are a wind that will blow people to hell, Matt. 5:22. They are the devil's bellows to blow up the fire of anger; which may make fearful havock ere it be quenched, Prov. 15:1.

5thly, By mocking, scoffing, and deriding speeches. These are reckoned among the sufferings of the martyrs, Heb. 11:36. 'Others had trial of cruel mockings.' The soldiers mocking Christ, John 19:3 is compared to the baiting of dogs, Psal. 22:16. See how children paid for this usage to the prophet Elisha, 2 Kings 2:22, 24.

Lastly, By cursings, imprecations, and wrathful wishings of ill and mischief to our neighbours; which is but throwing up hellish fire on others, that comes down and burns up him that threw it, Psal. 109:18.

3. There is eye-murder, which vents itself by a wrathful countenance, and all gestures of that kind, such as high and proud looks, and fierce looks, Prov. 6:17. The spirit of God takes notice of Cain's countenance, Gen. 4:5. As there is adultery in looks, so there may be murder in them, not only angry looks, but looks of satisfaction on the miseries of others, which God knows the meaning of, Obad. 12 gnashing with the teeth, and all such gestures of a person, denoting a heart boiling with wrath and revenge, Acts 7:54.

4. There is hand-murder, even where death killeth not. And people may be guilty of this two ways.

1st, By way of omission, when we with-hold and give not help to those that are in distress, to save their life or living, Judg. 5:2, 3 neglecting the sick, not visiting and helping them as need requires, Luke 10:31, 32 not affording means of life to the poor in want, Jam. 2:15, 16 for those put out the flame of life that do not feed it. We should then put on bowels of mercy and charity, in imitation of Job, chap. 31:16, &c. It is observable that the sentence against the wicked runs on unmercifulness to the poor members of Christ, Matt. 25:41, &c.

2dly, By way of commission. And so men are guilty,

(1.) As they strike against the living of others, their means and way of subsistence. This goes under the general name of oppression, a crying sin, Ezek. 22:7. Thus this command is broken by extortion, landlords racking of their lands so as labourers cannot live on them, tenants taking other's lands over their heads, sometimes to the ruin of honest families, masters not allowing servants whereupon to live; and, generally, by all kind of oppression, which in God's account is murder, Isa. 3:14, 15. Micah 3:3.

(2.) As they strike against the body and life itself, Thus men are guilty, by fighting, striking, and wounding others, Exod. 21:18, 22. How many have been guilty as murderers in the sight of men, that have had no design to go the full length, when they fell to fighting?

Persecution is a complication of all these; and therefore the better the cause is, the worse is the deed. It is a main engine of him who was a murderer from the beginning. And God will reckon with them as murderers at that great day, Matt. 25:41, 42, &c.

Lastly, Men may be guilty of the blood of others otherwise. As,

(1.) By sinful occasioning in others those things whereby our neighbour sins against his own soul, Quod est causa causæ, est etiam causa causati. So people sin by occasioning in others discontent, fretfulness, immoderate sorrow, &c. 1 Sam. 1:6. Wherefore we should beware of that, as we would not be guilty of their blood.

(2.) By all the ways we said men co-operate to the destroying of other souls, they may be guilty of killing others' bodies; as by commanding, counselling, or anywise procuring the taking away of men's living or lives unjustly. So David murdered Uriah by the sword of the Ammonites. So informers against the Lord's people in time of persecution are murderers in God's sight, Ezek. 22:9. Yea, the approving, or any way consenting to it, makes men guilty, Acts 8:1.

Now, Sirs, examine yourselves in this matter; and who will not be brought in blood-guilty, guilty of their own and their neighbour's blood, the blood of their souls and bodies! God's law is spiritual and sees the guilt of blood where we plead Not guilty. Let us be humbled and convinced, and apply to the blood of Christ, that we may be washed from it.

OF THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

EXOD. 20:14.—Thou shalt not commit adultery.

THE scope of this command is the preservation of our own and our neighbour's chastity and purity. God is a holy God, and the devil is an unclean spirit: we must therefore study purity in all manner of conversation. Our Lord puts this command before the sixth, Mark 10:19 because our chastity should be as dear to us as our life, and we should be as much afraid of that which defiles the body as that which destroys it.

This command is a negative precept, and expressly forbids adultery: but under that is comprehended all manner of uncleanness whatsoever, with all the causes and occasions leading thereunto. And the positive part of this command is, that we must preserve our own and our neighbour's chastity by all due means.

In discoursing further, I shall consider,

I. The duties required in this command.

II. The sins forbidden therein.

III. Make some practical improvement.

I. Our first business is to consider what is required in this command; and the Catechism, agreeably to holy scripture, tells us, that it requires 'the preservation of our own and our neighbour's chastity in heart, speech, and behaviour.'

The duties of this command may therefore be reduced to two general heads. 1. The preservation of our own chastity. 2. The preservation of that of our neighbour.

FIRST, This command requires us to preserve our own chastity and purity. There is a twofold chastity. 1. In single life; when it is led in purity, it is like the angelical; when in impurity, it is devilish. 2. There is conjugal chastity, when married persons keep themselves within the bounds of the law of that state. This lies in two things. (1.) With respect to all others, keeping themselves pure and uncorrupted. (2.) With respect to another, keeping themselves within the bounds of Christian sobriety and moderation. In whatsoever state we are, 'this is the will of God, even our sanctification, that we should abstain from fornication; that every one of us should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of concupiscence,' 1 Thess. 4:3, 4, 5.

Now, there is a threefold chastity required of us, and to be preserved by us.

First, Chastity in heart, 1 Thess. 4:5 forecited. God knows the heart, and therefore his laws reach the heart, and he will judge for heart-sins. We must keep our minds pure, that the thoughts be not led astray and corrupted. Hence Job 'made a covenant with his eyes,' chap. 31:1. And we must keep our affections pure, that they be not vitiated. Job saw this when he appeals to God, 'If mine heart have been deceived by a woman,' ver. 9. This is to be pure before God, who seeth in secret, and searcheth the hidden things of darkness. The least glance over this hedge is a crime.

Secondly, Chastity of speech, Col. 4:6. 'Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.' As there is tongue-murder, there is tongue-adultery. But our speeches must savour of sobriety and purity: and so they will, if the heart be pure; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The Holy Ghost, in the scriptures, gives us a pattern to be imitated in our speeches concerning those things that have a natural turpitude with them, vailing the same in modest expressions.

Thirdly, Chastity in behaviour, which comprehends both the keeping of the body undefiled by any gross act, and a modest carriage every way, 1 Pet. 3:2. Modesty must appear in the whole of our behaviour, that the purity of the heart may shine forth thereby, as the candle gives light through the lanthorn.

Now, as this threefold chastity is required here, so the proper means for preserving it are also required.

1. Watching over our senses. These are the ports at which Satan breaks in, and ruins people's purity. The heart and the senses are like a candle-wick, at the end of which lies a heap of powder. Objects set fire to the senses at the wick, and these carry it along to the heart where the corruption lies as a heap of powder. Particularly,

(1.) The eyes, Job 31:1. These were the gates at which sin first entered into the world; and these have been the gates of destruction to many, whereby their fame, body, and souls, have been destroyed together. It is remarkable that the Sodomites were smitten with blindness, who took so little care to watch their eyes while they had the use of them. Curious glances of the eye have been fatal to many, as to David, 2 Sam. 11:2 and to Joseph's mistress, Gen. 39:7.

(2.) The ears. The corruption of the heart makes people liable to be chained with Satan's fetters by the ears as well as the eyes; as appears from Prov. 7:21, 22. 'With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks.' And curious listening to rotten speeches, or whatsoever has a tendency to corrupt the heart is to open a door to let out our purity.

2. Temperance, a sober use of meat, drink, sleep, and recreations. Hence our Lord warns his disciples, Luke 21:34. 'Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness.' Temperance is a necessary hedge for chastity, and the breaking over that hedge is a near way to sacrifice the other. See Acts 24:24, 25. 'And, after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.—And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.' Why did the apostle chuse that subject before these great persons? Why, truly it was very fit. Historians tell us, that this Drusilla was a most libidinous woman, and had left her husband, Aziz king of Emenessa; and while he was yet living, she was married to Felix, who was taken with her beauty; and so they lived together in adultery. The body being pampered becomes a luxuriant beast; and those that cram their bellies with meat and drink, are but one remove from, and in near disposition to filthiness; for one sensuality makes way for another.

On this account it is that fasting and prayer may be to people a duty of this command; for, as some devils are not cast out, so some are not held out but by fasting and prayer. They that would keep themselves pure, must have their bodies in subjection, and that may require, in some cases, a holy violence, 1 Cor. 9:27.

3. Keeping of chaste and modest company. Hence Solomon exhorts, Prov. 5:8, 9. 'Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel.' How many have been ruined by the company they have fallen into, worse than they had fallen into a den of lions and wolves! III company wears off insensibly the impressions of virtue on people's spirits; and if they be not at war with them, the maintaining of peace and converse will make people like them.

4. Being busied in some honest employment. Those that would be virtuous indeed, must not eat the bread of idleness. Honest labour and business cuts off many temptations that idle persons are liable to. Had David been in the field with his army, when he was rising from off his bed in the evening-tide, 2 Sam. 11:2 he had preserved his chastity when he lost it, and so had Dinah, if she had been at her business in her father's house, when she went out to see the daughters of the land, Gen. 34:1.

5. Marriage, by those that have not the gift of continency. Hence says the apostle, 1 Cor. 7:2, 9. 'To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.'—Neither marriage nor single life are in themselves morally good or evil, but indifferent. But that state of life is to be chosen by every one, that will most conduce to their leading a holy life. So every particular person ought by themselves to ponder their gift, and other circumstances, which will let them see what is sin and what is duty in this case.

6. Cohabitation and conjugal love and affection betwixt married persons, without which that state will be no fence to purity, but a snare. Hence Solomon says, Prov. 5:19, 20. 'Let her be as the loving hind, and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times, and be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?'

7. Lastly, Shunning all occasions, and resisting all temptations, to the contrary, Prov. 5:8 forecited. So did Joseph, Gen. 39:8. It is a dangerous business to parley with them. The town that is content to capitulate with the enemy, is next door to surrendering. There are two sins that the scripture bids us flee from. 1. Idolatry, 1 Cor. 10:14. 2. Uncleanness, 1 Cor. 6:18. Why? Because they are bewitching evils. It is safer to flee, than to stand to fight them.

SECONDLY, This command requires us to preserve the chastity of others, and that so far as we can, in their hearts, lips, and lives. For so far as we might prevent the sin of others, and do it not, and much more when we occasion it, it becomes ours. Besides, that in preserving our own chastity, we preserve that of others, and so the means conducing to the one do also conduce to the other. Our duty in this point may be reduced to these two heads.

1. That we may do nothing which may ensnare others. For whosoever lays the snare is partner in the sin that comes by it. A lamentable instance of this we have in Judah and his daughter-in-law: they were neither of them careful to preserve the other's chastity, and so they fell each by another's snare, Gen. 38:14, 15, 16. For this cause modest apparel is here required, 1 Tim. 2:9: and a careful avoiding of all unseemly behaviour, which may have a tendency to defile the minds of others, though we ourselves have no ill intention. Thus, Bathsheba's washing herself in a place where she might be seen of others, was the sad occasion of the sin that David and she were plunged into, 2 Sam. 11:2. And truly where both grace and good

manners are wanting, it is little wonder that people break their necks over one another.

2. That we do every thing incumbent on us to preserve the chastity of others, in heart, speech, and behaviour. Let married persons live together in due love and affection to one another. Let each one be an example of purity to others. Let those whom ye see in danger be rescued by all means, whether by force or persuasion, as the circumstances require. And let none bring others' guilt on their own heads, by being silent when they see the smoke, till the flame rise and discover itself. Let parents and masters do what they can to prevent the ruin of their children and servants, by rebuking any lightness about them, exhorting them, and praying for them; keeping them out of ill company, not suffering them to be idle or vague, and seasonably disposing of children in marriage. Our bodies are the Lord's; we are or ought to be the temples of God; the heart is the most holy place of the temple, and our speech and behaviour the holy place. Let us take heed we bring in no unclean thing there, but keep his temple pure; for if any defile the temple of God, him will God destroy.

II. I come now to shew, what is forbidden in this command. It forbids 'all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions.'

In nothing more quickly did the corrupt nature of man vent itself, than in inordinate concupiscence, which brought shame along with it, as its just punishment; which makes it hard to speak of it, and so much the rather that corrupt nature is apt, through Satan's influence, to turn the very commandment against it into an occasion of sin. Therefore, though there is a necessity of speaking something on it, we cannot enlarge with that freedom upon it that we can do on other commands. Sift your hearts, then, as in the presence of a holy God, who will call us to an account in this matter before his tremendous judgment-seat, and hear his holy law, Thou shalt not commit adultery.

In this short abbreviate of the law of God, where one sin is expressly condemned, under it are forbidden all sins of the same kind. So here the whole dunghill of filthiness is set before us for our abhorrence, and detestation of our souls, as we would not bring down the wrath of God on us. Here then all gross acts are forbidden. As,

1. All unnatural lusts, not to be mentioned without horror; filthy fellowship with devils, as the guilty do suppose; Sodomy, persons abusing themselves with those of their own sex, Rom. 1:24–27; bestiality, Lev. 18:22; And to these we may add incest, which is betwixt persons within the forbidden degrees of consanguinity or affinity, Lev. 18:6. Concerning which this is to be observed, that a man must hold at the same distance from the relations of his wife as his own, and contrariwise, Lev. 20:14; and such unnatural mixtures can never be sanctified by marriage.

2. Adultery, where one of the parties, or both are married. In this case the aggravations of the sin of the married party will be justly charged upon the single person; and for both, 'whoremongers and adulterers God will judge,' Heb. 13:14. And bigamy and polygamy are adultery; for the vile fact cannot be sanctified, but made worse, by marriage with the adulterer or adulteress, Hos. 4:10; 'They shall commit whoredom, and shall increase.'

3. Fornication, which is betwixt single persons, Col. 3:5, 6. 'Mortify your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, &c. For which thing's sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience.' Whoredom is a sin that without repentance is a sad badge of a subject of Satan, Eph. 5:5. 'No whoremonger nor unclean person—hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God and Christ.' And a vast inconsistency there is betwixt being a member of Christ, and that of a harlot, 1 Cor. 6:15.

4. Rape, or forcing a person to filthiness, Deut. 22:25. This is a capital crime by the laws of God and men.

5. Secret uncleanness in a person by themselves alone, whether they be waking, Eph. 5:12; or sleeping, at least so far as they have occasioned it to themselves by their own corrupt imaginations.

6 Lastly, Immoderate and unseasonable use even of the marriage-bed, and much more of the bed of whoredom. Mark these passages, 1 Thess. 4:3, 4. 1 Cor. 7:5. Isa. 58:13. Ezek. 22:10 and 18:6.

These are the several kinds of vileness here forbidden. But this command goes further, and forbids three sorts of uncleanness besides.

1. Uncleanness in heart, all speculative filthiness, unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections, though people do not intend to pursue them to the gross act, Matt. 5:28; 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' Chap. 15:19; 'Out of the heart proceed—adulteries, fornications.' These fall not under the eye of men, but are open to the eye of God, who will judge accordingly. A voluntary thought of these things is dangerous, a delightful rolling of them in the heart is uncleanness before God, and a vitiated habit, whereby on every light occasion these filthy sparks are kindled in the heart, is worst of all, and most abominable.

2. Uncleanness in words, all filthy communications and obscene language, Eph. 4:29; 'Let no corrupt communications proceed out of your mouth.' They are the discoveries of a filthy heart; for 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,' contrary to nature, propaling those things which nature teaches to keep secret. They are snares to the hearers; and to speak of them for delight is to act the filthiness in words, when they cannot do it otherwise. Neither will the art some have in dressing up their filthy notions in figurative terms excuse; but these in some sort are most dangerous, because the devilish wit displayed in them makes them more sticking; and so by means of the like phrases occurring in holy exercises, they are the readier even to defile these. Of this sort are filthy songs and ballad

singing; and the delightful listening to such things, as the simple youth did to the speeches of the adulterous whore, Prov. 7:18–21.

3. Uncleanliness in actions. Besides the gross acts, there are others leading thereunto, which are there also forbidden. As,

(1.) Wanton looks: there are 'eyes full of adultery,' 2 Pet. 2:14; 'wanton eyes,' Isa. 3:16; even a look for unlawful carnal delight is the venting of the impurity of the heart; and though it be only from levity and curiosity, it is sinful, as a mean leading to evil.

(2.) Impudent and light behaviour, and immodest gestures, Isa. 3:16; indecent postures, contrary to religion and good manners. These are hellish matters of sport, that defile the actors, and those that are witnesses to them without abhorrence. And on this ground stage-plays and filthy pictures are amongst the things forbidden in this command, Ezek. 23:14–16.

(3.) Luxurious embraces and dalliances. These are as smoke going before the flame, and were practised by the adulterous whore, Prov. 7:13.

Now, as all these are here forbidden, so all occasions and incentives to lust are forbidden, all that has a tendency to corrupt our own or neighbour's chastity.

(1.) Immodest apparel, Prov. 7:10. God appointed apparel; [1.] For necessity, to cover our shame and nakedness; [2.] To distinguish sexes; [3.] To distinguish callings, the more noble from the meaner sort. The devil has found out the fourth to be enticements to lust.

(2.) Keeping ill company. This has been the ruin of many: therefore Solomon advises, Prov. 5:8. 'Remove thy way far from her,' a strange woman or whore; 'and come not nigh the door of her house.' It was Joseph's commendation that he fled from his mistress. Whatever the company be, people should beware that they cast not themselves into snares.

(3.) Idleness, the nursery of all filthiness, Ezek. 16:49. This exposeth to many temptations; for Satan will be ready to find idle people work. Gadding and vaguing abroad can hardly miss to have an unsavoury end.

(4.) Intemperance, gluttony, and drunkenness. These have a tendency to murder, which is forbidden in the sixth command, and to uncleanness, forbidden in the one under consideration, Prov. 23:30, 31, 33. Notable to this purpose is that scripture, Jer. 5:8; 'They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife.'

(5.) Promiscuous dancing, or dancing of men and women together. This entertainment, however reckoned innocent among many, is evidently an incentive to lust, Isa. 23:15, 16, 17. It is supposed, that it was to a dancing match among the daughters of the land that Dinah went forth, when she was dealt with as an harlot. This practice seems to be struck at by these scriptures, Rom. 13:13; 'Let us walk—not in chambering and wantonness,' 1 Pet. 4:3 where mention is made of 'walking in revelling.' It is offensive to the grave and pious, is condemned by our church, yea, and has been condemned by some sober heathens.

(6.) Undue delay of marriage, 1 Cor. 7:7, 8, 9; for they that refuse the remedy, strengthen the disease.

(7.) Unjust divorce, Matth. 5:33; wilful desertion, 1 Cor. 7:12, 13; want of conjugal affection, and all harshness and unkindness betwixt married persons. These are to be avoided as incitements to uncleanness.

(8) Lastly, The popish doctrine and practice of forbidding lawful marriages, 1 Tim. 4:3; dispensing with unlawful marriages, Mark 6:18; tolerating of stews or bawdy houses, Deut. 23:17; and entangling vows of single life, Mark 9:10, 11.

I shall next make some improvement of this subject.

1. Let those that have fallen into the sin of uncleanness, repent, and walk humbly all the days of their life under the sense of it. There are, alas! not a few amongst us to whom this exhortation belongs. And perhaps, if their eyes were opened, they would see something in their lot that God has sent to go along with them, as a mark of his displeasure against that their sin; wherein they might with no great difficulty read their old sin in a continued punishment. That sin may be forgotten with us, that is not so with the Lord.

2. Let those that stand take heed lest they fall. Labour to get your hearts possessed with a dread of this sin, and watch against it, especially ye that are young people, seeing it is a sin most incident to youth when the passions are most vigorous; which yet may stick fast with the blue marks of God's displeasure upon you when you come to age. For motives, consider,

(1.) It is not only a sin, but ordinarily, if not always a plague and punishment for other sins. It is a mark of God's anger against the person that is permitted to fall into it, Prov. 14. 'The mouth of a strange woman is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the Lord, shall fall therein.' This is a heavy mark of God's indignation, which is worse than to fall into a fever, or some lingering distemper; for a person may recover of these in a short time, but it is not so easy to recover the other.

(2.) It is a sin that very few ever get grace to repent of. It stupifies the conscience, and wastes all sense of sin from it, Hos. 4:11. I have seen, alas! too many that have made public satisfaction for that sin; but allow me to say, I have seen very few by whose repentance I was much edified. Hear what the Spirit of God says of these unhappy people, Prov. 2:19. 'None that go unto her, return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.' None, that is, very few; but some indeed do, as among the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 6:9, 11. And be not offended, but cautioned, if I say, that few women particularly ever get grace to repent of it. Solomon said it before me, Eccl. 7:28. 'A woman among all those have I not found.' And observe what is said, Acts

24:25 that Felix trembled when Paul preached, though he repented not; but there is not a word of Drusilla's being moved.

(3.) It dishonours and debases the body, 1 Cor. 6:18. Our bodies are the members of Christ or should be; but how are they debased, being made members of an harlot? And how low and contemptible a thing is such a wretched creature, even in the eyes of those that join with them?

(4.) It leaves an indelible stain upon their reputation; their honour is sunk, and there is no recovering of it, Prov. 6:33. Though the sin may be pardoned before God, yet the blot lies on their name, while they have a name on the earth. Yea, and when they are dead and gone, there bastard posterity still lie under the stain, whereof they could be no cause.

(5.) Poverty and want oft-times follow it. It natively tends to poverty, Prov. 5:10 and there is a secret curse of that nature that often accompanies it, Prov. 6:26. 'By means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread.' How many have been made miserable by it, who have had occasion as long as they lived to remember they had ruined themselves?

(6.) Lastly, It is ruining to the soul, Prov. 6:32. 'He that doth it,' commit adultery with a woman, 'destroyeth his own soul.' It ruins it here, in so far as it defiles the conscience, fetters the affections, blinds the mind, utterly unfits for communion with God, till the guilt be washed off by the application of Christ's blood, after a frightful awakening of the conscience. And if they do not repent of this sin, it will destroy the soul for ever. Let these scriptures imprint a horror of it on the minds of all, Heb. 13:4. 1 Cor. 6:9. Gal. 5:19, 21. Rev. 21:8.

I close with a few directions in so many words.

1. Give yourselves away soul and body to Jesus Christ, and learn to live by faith, sensible of your own weakness, and relying on his

promised strength; for without him ye can resist no sin, nor temptation to sin.

2. Beware of a carnal frame of sloth and laziness. Labour to be spiritual and heavenly in the frame of heart, Gal. 5:16. 'Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.'

3. Watch over your heart and senses. Make a covenant with your eyes, as Job did, that ye may avoid unlawful looks; and never venture on the devil's ground, otherwise ye will fall into the snare.

4. Study mortification of all your unruly lusts and passions, and beware of all occasions and incentives to this wickedness.

5. Keep at a distance from immodest company, and be not too frolicsome and foolish, light and airy in your discourse.

6. Lastly, Pray fervently and importunately, that the Lord may save you from this foul sin, and all temptations to it; saying with David, Psal. 119:37. 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.'

OF THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

EXOD. 20:15.—Thou shalt not steal.

THIS command respects men's goods and outward estate in the world; and the scope of it is to procure and further the same by all good means. And the law of God respecting this plainly says, that religion is highly concerned in our civil actions, working, buying, and selling, and all the ways of advancing of the outward estate. In these we are hedged about by this command, as well as in natural things by the sixth and seventh. God's law follows us wherever we go, to the house or field, bed or board, church or market. This command also

plainly establishes distinct properties, and that there is no universal community of goods, but every one has his own portion.

This being a command of the second table, it respects ourselves as well as our neighbour. And so the meaning is, Thou shalt not steal from thyself nor any other; thou shalt not wrong thyself nor others. And as in every negative is applied an affirmative, so while stealth or theft is here forbidden, the contrary is required, namely, the procuring and furthering of our own and others' welfare in these things, but by means only that are lawful.

In discoursing further from this subject, I shall shew,

I. What is required in this command, viz. 'the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others.'

II. What is forbidden, viz. 'Whatsoever doth or may unjustly hinder our own or our neighbour's wealth or outward estate.'

III. Make application.

I. I am to shew what is required in this command. And,

FIRST, God requires us in this command, by lawful means, to procure and further our own wealth and outward estate. We may take up this in these seven things.

1. We should look unto God for things necessary and convenient for us. Here we should begin our care about temporal things; 'for he it is that giveth thee power to get wealth,' Deut. 8:18 and without his appointment our endeavours will not succeed, Psal. 127. All the creatures depend on God's provision, as caged birds on those to whose care they are committed, Prov. 30:3. And so our Lord teaches us to pray every day, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' Matth. 6:11 seeing God has comprehended this in the promise.

2. A provident care and study to get things necessary and suitable to our condition, 1 Tim. 5:8. To pray, and cast off means, is presumption; to use means, but neglect praying, and looking to the Lord, is atheism. We should keep the middle way betwixt carelessness and anxiety, and hold in the way of moderate care in these things; for we are not to expect to be like the lilies that toil not, neither spin, and yet are clothed.

3. For this cause every body must have a lawful calling and employment, and duly use it, that so he may be useful to himself, and worth his room in the world, and not like mice and rats, good for nothing but to devour what others labour for. Adam in innocence had a calling, that of dressing and keeping the garden of Eden, Gen. 2:15 and so had his sons afterwards, though born to greater estate than any now can pretend to, the one being a keeper of sheep, and the other a tiller of the ground, Gen. 4:2. But we must be sure it be a lawful calling, Eph. 4:28. But what avails it if it be not duly used? Therefore God requires of men that they labour to be skilful in it, and not bunglers at what they take in hand, Prov. 14:8 and he allows men to look to himself for that end, Isa. 28:26 and likewise that they be diligent and industrious in it, and not loiterers, Prov. 10:4 for laziness will make a thief, either directly or indirectly. And this is quite opposite to God's appointment, Gen. 3:19.

4. We are to take the moderate comfortable use of the product of our diligence, using and disposing it for our necessity and conveniency, according to our condition in the world, Eccl. 10:12, 13. For to what end do men get wealth, if they have no power comfortably to use it? As good want it, as not to have the necessary and convenient use of it. Such steal and rob (in the sense of this command) from their nearest neighbour, that is, themselves.

5. Withal God requires men here to be frugal and honestly sparing, i. e. to keep a due medium betwixt lavishness and niggardly pinching, Prov. 21:20. This frugality directs to the right managing of what God has given, so as, (1.) People do not cast out their substance on trifles

that are for no good purpose, but on such things as there is some solid use of, Isa. 55:2 and amongst these are to be reckoned extravagant furniture for back and belly, in which people cannot satisfyingly to conscience answer the question, What needs all this waste? (2.) That of those things which may be useful, there be nothing lost. When Christ had provided bread enough, he gives particular orders to gather up the fragments, John 6:12. (3.) That this care proceed not from carnal affection to the world, but from conscience towards God, that we abuse not his benefits, and take care to do good by what is spared to ourselves or to others, though it were even to beasts. Lastly, True frugality will be effectual to make us ready to lay out for God on pious uses, to the poor and otherwise, as the best way to save, Prov. 11:24.

6. Careful avoiding of whatsoever may embarrass our affairs, and wrong our own wealth and outward estate.—Thus God requires men to take heed that they do not inveigle themselves in unnecessary pleas and law-suits, 1 Cor. 6:1–8 rash cautionry, Prov. 11:5 whereby sometimes men ruin themselves and families, and so sin against God, themselves, and their house. Of this sort may be reckoned people's rash and foolish engaging in things that they are in no probable case rightly to manage, stretching farther than they can well be supposed able to reach.

7. Lastly, Moderation of heart with respect to worldly goods, Phil. 4:5. (1.) We must moderate our judgment about them, that we put not too high a value and esteem on them, 1 Tim. 6:17. (2.) We must moderate our wills about them, that we be not among those that will be rich; for that will carry us over this hedge, ver. 9. (3.) We must moderate our affections to them. We must beware of love to them, ver. 10; for the covetous heart will not stick at undue means. We must moderate our care about them, resting in God's promise, and depending on his providence, Matt. 6:25, 26 and be content with our lot, Heb. 13:5. For they that are not content, have what they will, are always poor; and their eye will be evil towards others also.

SECONDLY, God requires in this command, that we, by lawful means, procure and further the wealth and outward estate of others. We are not born for ourselves, nor must we live for ourselves. We are members one of another as men, and much more as Christians; and selfishness is offensive to God, and destructive to society. We may reduce this to two general rules of practice, founded on the light of nature, and confirmed by the word.

First, Give every one their due. The natural conscience dictates this, however little it is regarded; and God's word confirms it, Rom. 13:7. If ye do it not, ye rob them, or steal from them. So God will reckon, and so will men's consciences reckon at last. In whatever relation ye stand to them, as masters, servants, neighbours, or under any particular bargain with them, or obligation to them, give them what is due to them.

Secondly, Do as ye would be done to. This also a natural conscience dictates, and the word confirms, Matt. 7:12. If we must love our neighbour as ourselves, we must not do to him what we would have nobody do to us. If ye do otherwise ye steal from them, ye wrong them, your own consciences being judges. For if they would do so to you, ye declare they are unjust to you; so if ye do so to them, ye must either find out a law for them, which ye are not under, or else your own consciences will condemn you as breakers of the law of God, which is common to both. To move you to walk by these rules, consider,

1. In vain will ye pretend to Christianity without it.—This is natural religion, which revelation came not to destroy, but to confirm, Tit. 2:12. And the Heathens, who in their Pagan darkness saw these rules of righteousness, and walked more by them than many Christians, will rise up in judgment against many that profess the name of Christ, and yet make so little conscience that way. People must either walk by them, or quit the name of Christians. If they will do neither of them now, Christ will strip them at length out of their player's coat, and make them appear before the world in their proper colours.

2. Ye will never Bee heaven without it, 1 Cor. 6:9. If people get to heaven in another way, they must step over all the law and the prophets, Matth. 7:12. I grant that these will not bring people to heaven; people may walk by them, as some sober heathens have done, and yet go to hell; but without it people will never see it. For though our good works and honest dealings with men will not save us, yet our ill works and unrighteous dealings will damn us, 1 Thess. 4:6. But to be more particular, we may take up this in five things.

1st, God requires of us that we be careful to prevent our neighbour's skaith and loss, as we have opportunity, Deut. 22:1. For the loss we see him get and can prevent, but do it not, is in effect the same as if we downrightly procured it to him. That which we can hinder, and do not, is our fault before the Lord; and in this sense each man is bound to be his brother's keeper.

2dly, That we deal honestly in all matters between man and man. If we would not come under the guilt of stealing from them, we must in all our dealings with them be strict observers of truth, faithfulness, and justice; dealing in simplicity and plainness, Psal. 15:2, 4; Zech. 7:4, 10; whether it be in bargains, buying and selling, in matters of trust concredited to us, or any thing of his we have under our hands. We must deal with God as if the eyes of men were on us; and with men as knowing the eyes of God are on us. A Christian indeed will do so. He will be an upright dealer with men, a slave to his word, a man that never wants a quick-sighted witness to his actions. And therefore it will be all one to him whether his party be absent or present, skilful and that will not be cheated, or simple and easily deceived.

3dly, Restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof. This looks especially to two cases.

(1.) Things lost and found ought to be restored to the owners, and not concealed and kept, Deut. 22:2, 3: for the keeping up of what is another's against the owner's will, is a sort of theft and injustice,

contrary to the rules aforesaid. And therefore it cannot be kept with a good conscience.

(2.) Whatsoever we have wronged our neighbour of, by taking it away from him, ought to be restored, Lev. 6:2, 4. There is, [1.] The case of trust, wherein a thing committed to him by another is kept up, on some pretence that it is lost or so. [2.] In case of fellowship in trading together, when one puts a thing in his partner's hand, in which case it is easy for one to deceive another. [3.] In case of violence, when it is taken away by robbery, stealth, yea, and oppression, 1 Sam. 12:3. [4.] In case of cheaterly, when by fraud and circumvention it is taken away.

Now, in all these cases, and the like, restitution is necessary. It is true, actual restitution is sometimes beyond the power of him that should restore; yet in such a case the party is bound to go all the length he can, as appears from Exod. 22:3. But a readiness to restore to the utmost of our power is absolutely necessary. For he does not truly repent of his sin, who is not willing to do all he can to repair the wrong; nor is the love of righteousness and his neighbour in that man, who is not ready to give every one their due. And in this sense the rule holds, *Non tollitur peccatum, nisi restituitur*. It is remarkable that it is made one of the signs of true repentance, Ezek. 33:15. 'If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.' And said Zaccheus, Luke 19:8. 'If I have taken any thing from any man by fake accusation, I restore him fourfold.'

Now, the party obliged to make restitution, is not only the person that took a thing away, but he in whose hand it is found; though he had it not fraudulently, yet upon the discovery of the thing, he is obliged to return it, because the person who (suppose) sold it to him, had no right to it, and therefore could give him none. But particularly the person himself and his heirs, are bound to restore, Job 20:10; and that the thing itself, or the value of it, yea, and a reasonable

acknowledgement for the loss of it, Lev. 6:5. Luke 19:8. The restitution is to be made to the owner, or, if he be dead, to his heirs; and if neither can be found, to the Lord, Numb. 5:6, 7, 8. Luke 19:8.

In case the reputation of the party be in hazard, the restitution should be managed with that prudence that it may not be unnecessarily blasted; for which cause they that are in straits that way ought to consult some prudent person, either minister or Christian, that will be tender of them.

4thly, Charity and justice in the matter of loans. Here,

(1.) Lending to our neighbour in his necessity, is a duty we owe him for the welfare of his outward estate, Matth. 5:42; not only lending upon interest, which is lawful, so that it be moderate, Deut. 23:20; but freely, viz. to those that are poor, and require the loan for pressing necessity. In that case we ought to lend them freely such a quantity of money and goods as we can well enough bear the loss of, in case they be rendered incapable to pay it again. And so is that scripture to be understood, Luke 6:35; 'Lend hoping for nothing again.'

(2.) Returning or paying again thankfully what is borrowed by us, Exod. 22:14; And therefore we are not to borrow more than we are in a probable capacity to pay; which while some have not regarded, they have liberally lived on other men's substance, and in the end have ruined other men's families, and quite devoured their money as in another case, Gen. 31:15: for no man has more that he can call his own, than what is over and above his debt, Psal. 37:21; If the incapacity flow from mere providence, it is their affliction, but not their sin, 2 Kings 4:1.

Lastly, Giving unto the poor or those that are in need, according to their necessity and our ability, Luke 11:41. They are our neighbours, to whose outward estate we are obliged to look; they are to have mercy shown to them that way. A disposition of soul to help them is

requisite in all, even in those that have not a farthing to give, Prov. 11:25. What people give must be their own, 1 John 3:17 it must be thy bread, Eccl. 11:1. And therefore such as have not of their own, they cannot give what is another's, without the tacit consent and approbation or allowance of the owner; neither will God accept their robbery for burnt-offering. But even people that must work hard for their own bread, must work the harder that they may be able to give, Eph. 4:28. But they to whom God has given a more plentiful measure of the world's goods, must be so much the more liberal to the poor; for to whom much is given of him is much required. In helping the necessitous, the apostle's rules are to be observed, that special regard is to be had to our relations that may be in straits, 1 Tim. 5:8; and that though all that need are to be helped, yet special respect is to be had to the poor members of Christ, Gal. 6:10; and the greatest need is to be most regarded and most helped.

This duty is to be managed with these qualities.

(1.) People must give to the poor out of conscience towards God, and a design to honour him, Prov. 3:9; not out of vain-glory, else the work is lost as to acceptance, Matth. 6:1, 2.

(2.) With an honourable regard to the poor, either as Christians, and members of the same mystical body of Christ, or at least as of the same blood with ourselves, and not with contempt, and shaming of them, 1 Cor. 11:22.

(3.) Cheerfully and freely, not grudgingly and as by constraint, 2 Cor. 9:7.

(4.) According to the measure of what the Lord has given unto us, 1 Cor. 16:2; So the more we have, the more we ought to give. The particular quantity cannot be defined, but by wisdom and charity it must be defined by every one for themselves, Psal. 112:5.

To engage you to this duty, consider,

[1.] We are not absolute masters, but stewards of our goods. The whole world is God's household; and he has made some stewards to feed others, Luke 16:10, 11, 12. We must give account of our stewardship to him, who could have put us into their case, and them into ours.

[2.] It is a duty bound on us with ties of nature and revelation. The law of God requires it, 2 Cor. 8:9. Nature itself binds it on us, teaching us to do to others as we would be done by, if in their case. Not only Christianity, but humanity calls for it.

[3.] In this duty there is a singular excellency. For (1.) It is a blessed thing by the verdict of our blessed Lord, Acts 20:35; 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' (2.) The image and likeness of God shines forth in it in a peculiar manner, Luke 6:35, 36; 'Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful.' Though Christ became poor for us, yet he gave to the poor, to commend it to us by his example. (3.) It is particularly taken notice of in the day of judgment, Matth. 25:34, 35.

Lastly, It is the most frugal and advantageous way of managing of the world's goods. For,

(1.) It is the way to secure to ourselves a through-bearing; there is a good security for it, Prov. 28:27; 'He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack.'

(2.) It is the best way to secure what we have, which is liable to so many accidents, Eccl. 11:1. 'Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.' Laying out for God is better security than laying up what God calls for. For so it is put in a sure hand, that will be sure to pay it again. The poor and needy are God's receivers,

Prov. 19:17; 'He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again.'

(3.) It is the way to be rich, as the Bible points out the way, Prov. 3:9; 'Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of thine increase. Solomon observes the accomplishment of it, Prov. 11:24. 'There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.'

(4.) It is the way to secure comfort to us in the time when trouble shall overtake us, Psal. 41:1, 2, 3; Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.'

Lastly, God has promised that such shall find mercy, Matth. 5:7; always taking along what is said, ver. 3. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' See Luke 16:9. 1 Tim. 6:17, 18, 19.

II. I come now to shew, what is forbidden in the eighth commandment. It 'forbids whatsoever doth or may unjustly hinder our own or our neighbour's wealth or outward estate.'

The sins forbidden in this command may be reduced to these two heads: whatever doth or may hinder our own wealth unjustly; and whatever doth or may unjustly hinder our neighbour's wealth or outward estate.

FIRST, Whatsoever doth or may hinder our own wealth unjustly. This is necessarily understood; for we may neither do a sinful thing to procure our own wealth, nor yet to preserve it. But when there are lawful means which Providence calls us to the use of, and we do not use them, we sin against God and ourselves. Thus this command says to each of us, in the first place, Thou shall not steal from thyself. Thus we are guilty,

1. By idleness, when people that are able do not employ themselves in some honest calling or work according to their ability, 2 Thess. 3:11; The idle man wrongs himself, while he exposes himself to poverty, and so to a snare, by his not using means to preserve and improve his substance. And he sins against God, who has appointed, that in the sweat of his face man shall eat bread, Gen. 3:19; And this is so although he have enough of his own, and needs not be burdensome to others, Ezek. 16:49; He makes himself a waif for Satan to pick up.

2. By carelessness, sloth, and mismanagement in our calling, Prov. 18:9; Carelessness lets occasions of furthering our own wealth slip; and slothfulness in business is next to doing nothing at all. And they that cannot put down their hands to work diligently, will hardly miss some time or another to put out their hand to steal. Careless and slothful management of business by one hand in a family, may do more mischief than many diligent hands can remedy, Prov. 14:1. Religion does not allow either men or women to be drones in their family, good for nothing but to make a noise, take up room, and feed on the product of the diligence of their relatives, Rom. 12:11.

3. By not owning God in our business, and so slighting his blessing, who gives man power to get wealth, Deut. 8:18; It is he that gives rains and fruitful seasons, that makes the cattle to thrive or to be diminished, and that prospereth the work of our hands. Do they not stand in their own light that acknowledge him not in these things?

4. By wastefulness and prodigality, whereby people foolishly spend and lavish away what God has brought to their hands, Prov. 21:17; And indeed these two ordinarily go together, unthriftiness and wastery; for readily they that have no hands to gather, have two to scatter; and they that can do no good to get, are active at putting away. Thus they not only misapply what God has given them, but take the high way to poverty and stealing.

5. By rash engaging in such things as may ruin our wealth and outward estate, as unnecessary inveigling ourselves in law pleas, whereby the contentious humours of some have made them like the ass in the fable, that seeking his horns, lost his ears, 1 Cor. 6:6, 7, 8; as also cautionary, which although it be duty in some cases, as giving and lending is, yet if it be not managed with prudence and discretion may prove but a plucking out of the mouths of our own, to put it in the mouths of strangers, Prov. 11:15 and 6:1, &c.

6. By distrustful and distracting care in getting and keeping worldly things, Matth. 6:31. Can that man be wealthy indeed, who, have what he will, never has enough, and whose abundance suffereth him not to sleep? Eccl. 4:8. This keeps him from the comfort of what he has, that he robs himself of, which is the only valuable thing in worldly enjoyments, Prov. 10:22.

7. Lastly, By sordidness, which is when a man has no power to enjoy the gift of God, Eccl. 6:1, 2. We can scarcely say, have what they will, that they have it, but it has them; for they have not the convenient decent use of it. They are of no use but to be serviceable to people's necessities and conveniencies; so that where that is wanting, it is as good as if they had them not.

To conclude this: Let us walk conscientiously in these things, knowing that we are accountable to God in them. We are not at our own disposal, but must lay out ourselves as God calls us. Neither may we do with our own what we will; for we are but inferior lords of them, and must use them agreeably to the will of the great Proprietor.

SECONDLY, Whatsoever doth or may unjustly hinder our neighbour's wealth or outward estate, is forbidden here as theft in God's account. Whatsoever way we wrong others in their outward estate, comes under this notion of stealing. So this command says, Thou shalt not steal from others. In respect of our neighbour, this command is broken two ways.

First, By direct stealing, which is the taking away of what is our neighbour's against his will, to his hurt and loss. If it be done secretly, without the knowledge of the owner, it is called theft; if it be by violence, it is robbery, whether by sea or land. There are two sorts of it.

1. Stealing of persons, called man-stealing, 1 Tim. 1:9, 10. It was the stealing away of men, women, or children, either to use them or sell them for slaves. Slavery having no place among us, there is no practising it with us, so far as I know. But there want not other sinful practices participating of the nature of this sin, such as running away with persons for marriage, whereby their parents are robbed of what is their own; enticing away other people's servants, to the prejudice of their masters; and seducing people's children to vicious and lewd practices. All which are contrary to the golden rule of justice, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.'

2. Stealing of substance. Whereof there are three kinds. (1.) Stealing from the public or commonwealth, whereby the magistrate and nation are wronged. (2.) Stealing from the church, taking away of what is devoted for pious uses, for maintaining the service of God and the poor. It is called sacrilege, Rom. 2:22. These are the worst kinds of theft in regard of the relation these things have to God. (3.) Single theft, whereby private persons are wronged in their private substance. Whether the thing stolen be little or great, he that takes it away, is a thief, and is therefore excluded out of the kingdom of heaven, 1 Cor. 6:9, 10. A man may lose his soul by the unlawful getting of what is not worth a penny, as well as of what is worth a thousand. Did men and women believe the curse of God which they take up with the thing they take away from others, they would see they had a sad bargain of it, Zech. 5:3, 4.

Secondly, By indirect stealing, which, though not accounted theft among men, yet it is so in the sight of God. And of this there are a

great many ways, all here forbidden. People are thus guilty of theft, and break this command.

1. In their hearts, by nourishing those lusts that have a tendency thereto; for as there is heart-adultery, so there is heart theft. And this especially lies in these three things: (1.) Discontent with our condition, Heb. 13:5. This lays people open to the worst of snares. (2.) Envy and grudging at the good of others. This is the evil eye, which devours the substance of others. (3.) Covetousness. A covetous heart is that which stretches out the hand to steal.

2. In their conversation, by taking such ways as tend to the wronging of others in their outward estate, and really do wrong them, and take from them unjustly. This command is broken,

1st, By the idleness and sloth of those that are not able otherwise to maintain themselves. Every one is bound by this command to have a calling, and be diligent in it, if they be able. Therefore it is a sin for such to give themselves up to idleness, and live without a calling, or to be lazy in it, Eph. 4:28. 2 Thess. 3:10. 11. Hence it is evident,

(1.) That sturdy beggars are not to be tolerated; and no person being able to work for their maintenance can with a good conscience make a trade of begging. They that are able to work, but are not willing, ought to be compelled to it; and it is the sin and shame of the government that it is not so. For they directly set themselves in opposition to God's ordinance, Gen. 3:19. They carry not themselves either as subjects or church-members, and dispose themselves that way to all manner of wickedness without controul.

(2.) That no person can with a good conscience lay the burden of their maintenance on others, further than what they cannot prevent by their own utmost diligence in labouring for themselves. And therefore those that will rather seek than work, though they be able, are reckoned in God's account to steal it, though they think not so.

Idle and lazy persons are guilty of stealth two ways. They wrong them that have, being without necessity a burden to them. They wrong others that are really poor and unable to help themselves; for they rob them at least in part of what they should get; and whereas they ought to labour to help them, they do it not, Eph. 4:28.

2dly, By unlawful, base, and unwarrantable ways of getting gain. This the Spirit calls filthy lucre. For men must not only work, but work that which is good, that they may gain a maintenance. And if they take sinful ways to obtain it, it is theft in the sight of God.

(1.) Using unlawful arts in trades, Acts 19:19, 24, 25. Such are not working the thing that is good, but in itself evil, and tending to the debauching of mankind.

(2.) By raking together gain by our own sin, or the sin of others, as for gain to play the whore, or to do or help others to any sinful thing. Of this sort is the selling drink to those that go to excess in it, where people are instrumental in the ruin of the souls, bodies, and means of others, for their own filthy gain. Of this sort also are your set drinkings to help people to some stock; which is an occasion of much sin and excess. It must needs be base gain that is made that way, as being no way warranted by the word of God of helping them that are in need; and ordinarily it is seen to be blasted, so that it does little good. Must men be obliged to abuse themselves and God's good creatures to help others? Is that a way becoming Christian gravity and sobriety for helping those that need? But they will cast out their money liberally that way, that will not part with a penny to a poor object. Let those that need ply their hands well; and if that will not do to help them, let them take Christian methods for their help otherwise, and not run themselves on the sword-point of the curse denounced against such base gain, Hab. 2:15. 'Wo unto him that giveth his neighbour drink: that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also.' And let men of gravity and sobriety discourage those ways, and not partake of other men's sins.

(3.) By making merchandise of things that ought not to be sold or bought. If they be spiritual things, as sacraments and church-offices, it is Simony, Acts 8:20. If it be of justice, it is bribery, Job 15:34. Or whatsoever it is that people make merchandise of, which ought neither to be bought nor sold.

(4.) It is a base gain that is made by your penny-weddings, as they are commonly managed, being condemned both by the laws of the land and of the church. And for people to begin the world with treading upon the laudable laws of the state, and constitutions of the church, for a little base gain, cannot be but a sinful way, being offensive and disorderly, 1 Cor. 10:32. 2 Thess. 3:6. Our church, by act of Assembly, has declared them to be fruitful seminaries of all lasciviousness and debauchery, as well by the excessive number of people convened thereto, as by the extortion of them therein, and licentiousness thereat, to the great dishonour of God, the scandal of our Christian profession, and the prejudice of the country's welfare. And I appeal to your own consciences, if it be not a just character of them. The drinkings, dancings, excesses, and quarrelings that accompany them, are they suitable to the rules of Christianity? They are generally reckoned oppression, and a gentle way of begging; but I fear God will reckon them stealing, as a way of base gain. But we have such fresh experience of your respect to warnings from the Lord's word, that I need not doubt but if ye had occasion, we should have a penny-wedding next Tuesday, Hos. 4:4.

(5.) It is base gain that is made at playing at cards and dice, or any such game of hazard. For the lot being an appeal to God, it is dangerous to make a play of it. They occasion much sin of blaspheming God's providence under the name of ill luck when people lose, commending their good luck when they win, misspending time through a bewitching in the matter, whereby they cannot give over, the winners hoping to win more, and the losers hoping for better. Surely it is no working of that which is good, Eph. 4:28. A Popish doctor, in a treatise of his on plays, tells us, that all games of hazard are condemned by Pagans, the fathers, the most

able Popish and Protestant doctors, and that even Jesuit casuists find a mortal sin in playing at cards.

(6.) It is base gain when people stand at nothing, whether credit or conscience, if they can but reach it. Thus many reckon gain sweet, whatever way they get it. They will debase themselves to the meanest things to win a little thing, without any necessity. They will toil themselves excessively for what is very inconsiderable; and if charity and gifts be going, they will without necessity put in for their share, to the great prejudice of those that are truly needy, and cannot help themselves. These and all other ways of base gain are forbidden here as stealing.

3dly, This command is broken by family-frauds and robbery. For in this case one's enemies may be those of their own house. These family-frauds are committed,

(1.) By the husbands spending and wasting their money or goods, to the detriment of their wives and children. It is abominable robbery for men to ware that on their lusts, which should serve the necessities and conveniences of their families, as it falls out in the case of drunkards, adulterers, and mismanagers. But worst of all, while they themselves are kept full and their poor families sadly pinched, 1 Tim. 5:8.

(2.) By wives embezzling and putting away their husbands' goods-to his loss, by which means a man may soon be stolen off his feet, as we term it. It is quite contrary to the character of a virtuous woman, Prov. 31:12. 'She will do him (her husband) good, and not evil, all the days of her life.'

(3.) By children embezzling and taking away their parents' money or goods without their consent. There is no doubt a child may steal from his parents seeing he is not proprietor of their goods, Prov. 28:24. Though they think they may take at their own hand, God's word says the contrary.

(4.) By servants wronging their masters in their substance that is among their hands. By their employment and trust, they have occasion to steal from their masters, if conscience engage them not to honesty. And so they may be guilty of taking of their master's either for themselves or to give away to others, Tit. 2:9, 10.

(5.) Lastly, I will add by all such as tempt or encourage either husbands, wives, children, or servants, to wrong their relatives. These are deeply guilty; for, as we say, there would not be a thief if there was not a resetter, Psal. 50:18. Thus hostlers and others that entertain men to the prejudice of their families, steal from these families. Thus covetous neighbours, who have their intrigues with other people's servants and fawning flatterers that draw about people's houses, to make a prey, whether of simple wives, children, or servants, engaging them to rob their husbands, parents, or masters, to give them, are thieves in the sight of God, to be avoided as plagues and pests to a house, Prov. 29:24.

4thly, This command is broken by injustice and cheaterly in bargains and commerce, 1 Thess. 4:6. What is gotten in that way is stolen in God's account, Lev. 25:14. Thus men are guilty,

(1.) When they take advantage of their neighbour's necessity, either in buying or selling; as when a person is necessitated to sell a thing, the buyer takes the advantage to gain it much below the worth; or when the seller knows the buyer must needs have it, then to rack it above the worth to him, Lev. 25:14. Indeed, if the seller would not otherwise part with the thing, but to answer that necessity, or the buyer would not otherwise take it, the case alters; for then parting with his money or goods in that case requires a rational compensation.

(2.) When the seller commendeth, and the buyer dispraiseth the wares, contrary to their own conscience and knowledge, that so they may over-reach one another, Prov. 20:14. So no doubt the way of

prigging so long before people come to the due worth, is an insnaring way of dealing.

(3.) When men take advantage of their neighbour's ignorance in buying or selling. This sometimes falls out in buying, when the seller knows not the value of the thing, but the buyer does, and so gets it from him far below the worth. Oft-times in selling, when the seller imposes on the buyer's ignorance, either by express lying, saying the thing is what he really knows it is not, or concealing fraudulently the fault of it, as if, in selling a beast or any other thing, a man should conceal a known fault of the commodity, which he knows if the buyer knew, he would either not have it at all, or not at the price. In this case, men think it enough that the neighbour's eye is his merchant. But will ye apply this practice to the golden rule, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, Matth. 7:12; and let conscience say if it be fair dealing or not, Lev. 19:11. 'Ye shall neither do falsely, nor lie one to another.'

(4.) By adulteration of wares, mixing them with worse, to the prejudice, and without the knowledge of the buyer; the commodity perhaps good and sightly, where it appears to the buyer's eye, but full of refuse that is good for little or nothing, but to make weight, or fill up the measure, which he finds not till he is to make use of it. Amos 8:6.

(5.) By using false weights and measures, Micah 6:10, 11; or any deceit whatsoever about weights or measures, whether in buying or selling; as in the case where the party is absent, and therefore it is made scanty, or when men have one to buy with, and another to sell with, or whatever way men take to 'falsify the balances by deceit,' Amos 8:5.

(6.) When that which is bought is not precisely delivered, but is vitiated; as by taking away a part of what is good in it, and making it up with what is worse; so that though they have the same weight or measure which they bought, yet it is not of the same goodness. This

is direct stealth: for what is once sold is no more ours; and with the same justice ye might take a shilling out of your neighbour's pocket, putting in a sixpence for it.

(7.) Unfaithfulness in not performing condition, Psal. 15:4; when people make no conscience of keeping their word. This is not to be rigidly interpreted to involve men in guilt, when they use all moral diligence to perform their condition, but Providence puts a stop in their way; for in all promises of that nature, such an exception is to be understood; but when people have a sinful hand in not performing exactly according to promise.

(8.) Lastly, When payment is made with uncurrent money, consisting with the knowledge of the payer, Gen. 23:16; or like Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5 keeping back part of the price; a base and unjust custom with some, who still eat up a part of what they are obliged to pay, Prov. 3:27, 28.

5thly, This command is broken in fellowship, when people trade together, or have a common interest in one room together, and in the management thereof defraud and go beyond one another; which is the rise and spring of many brawls and grudges that neighbours have against one another, Lev. 6:2; So in over-stenting of ground beyond what falls to their share, shifting to bear proportionable burdens to their profit, breaking over any of the conditions of their fellowship, and raising their own gain out of their neighbour's loss, and many such things which men do to others that they would not have done to themselves; and therefore are pieces of injustice, and sorts of theft, here condemned.

6thly, It is broken in the matter of neighbourhood, as by removing marches or land-marks, Prov. 22:28; carelessness to keep our neighbours from skaith by us, whereas justice requires we should be as loath to do wrong to our neighbours, as to receive it from them. Far more when it is done designedly, as for people to stand and feed their beasts on their neighbour's grass, at times when they know they

cannot be caught in the thievish act. And of this sort is the turning out of beasts in the night-time, when there is no probability but they will be in their neighbour's skaieth, though they resolve to rise early, and set them right ere they can be noticed.

7thly, It is broken in matters of trust. Treachery under trust is amongst the worst pieces of injustice. Thus men are guilty when they give hurtful counsel to those that trust to them, and so betray them; when partners in trading are unfaithful one to another; when men have other people's business among their hands, their substance or their work, and prove unfaithful, because it is in the power of their hand. But the worst of all this sort is unfaithfulness to poor orphans left to men's care and tutoring, whom many hard hearts can treat most unjustly, to their loss or ruin, and to the bringing of a curse on themselves, God being the Judge of the fatherless in a special manner.

8thly, It is broken in the case of hiring many ways. As, (1.) When men wilfully or carelessly abuse a thing which they have hired, it is a piece of injustice. So men may be guilty in abusing the house they dwell in, or the horse they ride on, or the land they possess. (2.) When hirelings make no conscience of working honestly for their wages, as when they take wages for work, they have not skill to manage to the advantage of those that employ them; or when they spend time carelessly, and are not diligent for the advantage of those that employ them; and much more when they designedly work slightly for their own greater gain. (3.) When the hireling is defrauded in the matter of his wages, either by keeping it from him altogether, or not giving it him in due time, when it is in the power of our hand, or paying him with any insufficient thing, Jam. 5:4.

9thly, This command is broken in retaining instead of restoring what is not ours, but our neighbour's. Thus men are guilty in concealing things found, and with-holding them from the right owners when they are known, whom, according to the weight of the matter, they should be at pains to know; much more when, being found, it is

dispatched so as our neighbour can never have it again, Deut. 22:1, 2; So in all cases, where restitution is necessary, the retaining is a continued theft; for what we have taken away from others, we should be ready to restore. Indeed the party's giving of it takes away the necessity of restitution, and that though it be but rationally presumable that they do not desire such restitution.

10thly, It is broken in the matter of borrowing and not paying again. As, (1.) When people make no conscience of restoring what they have borrowed for their use, or preserving it entire, that it be not notably the worse of them. Borrowing and lending is a necessary bond of society among neighbours; and as lenders are obliged to be neighbourly, so borrowers should be so too, Exod. 22:14. (2.) Refusing to help our neighbour, by lending where our own affairs will spare it, and he is in straits, Matth. 5:42; and particularly a rigid standing at a distance from all lending to those that are low in the world, and under a particular strait; for in that case, I shewed before that it was a duty to lend to such, such a portion of money or goods as we can well bear the loss of, though never repaid, Luke 6:35. (3.) Not paying our just debts, if we are able, Psal. 37:21. And of this sort is borrowing what we are in no probable condition to pay. (4.) The staving off of payment, and shifting it, and obliging people to vexatious law-suits for the recovering of their due; for that is a sort of robbery, Prov. 3:30; And so is the involving people in law-suits for an unjust debt (5.) Lastly, Extortion in compensation for loans, Ezek. 22:12; which we call usury or ocker, Psal. 15 ult. and the requiring of all our debts rigidly, without mercy or compassion, Isa. 58:3.

11thly, It is broken by an uncharitable use of what is our own. The sovereign Proprietor of the world may do what he will; but so may not we, that are bound to use what is ours in the way of charity towards our neighbour. This is done many ways, particularly by the two following, taken notice of in the Larger Catechism on this command.

(1.) By unjust inclosures and depopulations, that is, inclosing grounds and dispeopling them, whereby it comes to pass that houses

are pulled down, and families cast out, to make room for beasts or so; and so the country is dispeopled, and some one, or a few, are built up on the ruins of many, Isa. 5:8. Micah 2:2.

(2.) By ingrossing commodities to enhance the price, whereby one gets such a commodity all in his own hand, so that he makes all that need it depend on him, and makes his own price as he will, seeing people cannot mend themselves at another hand. Such is the hoarding up of corn and other necessary things for a dearth, that they will not sell when people stand in need of them, Prov. 11:26.

12thly, It is broken by oppression, when a man, by his own power, favour, or interest, bears down his neighbours, either thrusting them from their right, or with-holding them from their due, or stretches beyond what his own right and title will warrant him, to the prejudice of a weaker party. Thus magistrates may oppress their subjects, masters their servants, landlords their tenants, and one powerful tenant or neighbour his weaker neighbour. This is a horrid sin in the sight of God, for men to use their power to distress others that are weaker than they. It is a sort of murder, condemned in the sixth command, Micah 3:2, 3 and of theft or robbery, condemned in the eighth, Ezek. 22:7.

13thly, It is broken by partaking with thieves or unjust persons, 50:18 and partakers in sin may lay their account to be partakers in plagues with the sinner. Now, partakers with thieves or unjust persons are,

(1.) All that encourage and tempt them to it: these directly concur to the guilt.

(2.) All that receive or harbour, stolen goods, Prov. 29:25. Such are all that join with them to hide what is taken away from their neighbours; such as wittingly and willingly take them from them as gifts, or that buy them from them, because they get a round pennyworth; but they are the dearest ever they bought, if they knew

the matter as it is; such as wittingly and willingly receive the profit of them; so the husbands, wives, children, and servants, are guilty of the theft of their relatives in that case. Doubly deceitful and cruel are they who receive the pickeries of children.

(3.) Such as do not hinder it when it is in their power; when people see a person at that soul-ruining trade, and let them be doing; certainly know them guilty, and yet will not so much as tell them of it prudently; though perhaps they will spread it to others, and then set their foot on it.

Lastly, This command is broken by unmercifulness to the poor, shutting up our bowels of compassion against them, which locks up the hand from giving them in their need. I shall say two things of it.

(1.) It is a complication of many sins in one. For,

[1.] It is a theft, Eph. 4:28. It is a taking from them what is their due by the law of God: for though we have the right of property in our own goods, the truly poor have a right of charity in them, so far as they need and we can spare.

[2.] It is ingratitude to God, who has given us so much, and yet in that case we will not part with a portion of it, when he requires it back by the poor, his receivers. It is the Lord himself that asks of us by the poor, and it is horrid ingratitude to refuse him, Mat. 25:40, 41.

[3.] It is perfidiousness in the stewardship which God has committed to us, Luke 16:10 as if a steward should use all for himself, and starve his master's family.

[4.] Lastly, It is a sort of murder, 1 John 3:15–17. For as the fire may be put out by with-holding fuel, as well as pouring water on it; so a man's life may be taken away by denying him the supports of life, as well as by cutting his throat.

(2.) So it brings on a complication of strokes from God. [1.] It is a moth in what a man has, and directly tends to poverty and want, Prov. 11:24, 23 for what men thus hold together, God in his anger scatters. [2.] It is inconsistent with the love of God, 1 John 3:17 and the want of bowels to the poor is the want of pure religion before God, Jam. 1 ult. [3.] Lastly, As men deal with the poor unmercifully, so they may expect God will deal with them, Prov. 21:13. Jam. 2:13.

Thus I have gone through the duties required, and the sins forbidden in this command, as they occurred. But a tender conscience, in applying this command in practice, will find much more than what I have said. And when we come to the light of the Lord at the great day, things will be seen required and forbidden in it (I doubt not,) that neither you nor I have thought of. Who can understand his errors? O what need of the blood of Christ, and grace to repent, and turn from our evil ways!

I shall now shut up my discourse on this command with two dehortations.

FIRST, I would dehort all and every one from stealing. Let every one abhor this sin. Let such as have stole, steal no more, but repent. I wish there were no ground to insist on this; but I am convinced that there is. I shall,

1. Offer some motives to press the forsaking of this sin.
2. Consider some occasions of it, and expose them.
3. Point out the remedies against it.

FIRST, I shall offer some motives to press the forsaking of this sin.

1. Consider how shocking it is to nature's light, that teaches us to do to others as we would be done to. So that if conscience be but in the deadthraw with the thief, and not quite dead, he is judged and condemned from within in the very act. No wonder the heart quake,

and the hands tremble, when they are put out, over the belly of the conscience, to that unlawful gain.

2. Consider the reproach of it. How disgraceful a name is that of a thief! If conscience have no weight with people, may they not regard their credit? Do not people regard to be hissed at by others? Job 30:5. It is true, they hope to carry it secretly; but how often is it seen that a bird of the air carrieth the voice, and they are surprised one time or other with shame covering their face?

3. It quite mars our acceptance and communion with God. The thief excommunicates himself from the presence of the Lord. He may pray to God, but God will not hear him; may come to sermons, but there is nothing for him there but words of anger. Judas was a thief, and both preached and prayed; but had no intercourse with God in these exercises. When the thief brings in the stolen goods, God goes out; and is not that a sad exchange, and are not the things stolen dear wares? And while he enjoys the sweet of it, it is mixed with the vinegar of God's wrath; till he repent, and restore to, if he be able, he can have no more access to God than the murderer while he has his sword in his neighbour's body, or the adulterer while his whore is in his arms, Jer. 7:9, 10.

4. Nay, it brings down a curse instead of a blessing. While he swallows down these goods, the curse goes down with it, which will choke him at length. It brings a curse on him, and that he has otherwise, Zech. 5:2–4. Sometimes it works on his own substance like a moth, and what he has decays, and do what he will he is always poor. Sometimes it works like a lion, so that though he have a full life of it a while by the gains of unrighteousness, yet at length all is swallowed up from him together, either by the hand of God or of men. However, it makes always a blasted, withered soul.

5. Lastly, It will ruin people eternally. The thief is liable to three tribunals. (1.) Of the state, seeing the laws of the land strike against it. Theft is punished with death, how equitably, I shall not say, for

there seems to be no proportion betwixt men's goods and lives. Pickery, or small theft, is punished arbitrarily, with disgrace enough. (2.) Of the church: for the discipline of the church ought to strike against it, and they are censurable for it, even to excommunication, 1 Cor. 5:11, 12. But it is for the most part so cleverly carried, that neither church nor state can touch them. But they will not escape. (3.) The tribunal of God, who is a Judge that will not want witnesses to prove the fact which no eye saw, while himself is omniscient, and there is a conscience within men's breast. And therefore I, as a messenger of that Judge, the eternal God, de in his name and authority summon, arrest, and bind over, every stealer, and partaker with stealers, hearing me, or that should be hearing me this day, to answer it before the tribunal of God; denouncing the eternal vengeance of God and everlasting damnation against them, to be assuredly executed against them if they repent not in time. And let the timber and stones of this house, and every one of you, be witnesses to this execution, to be produced when they and I shall stand before that tribunal, 1 Cor. 6:9, 10. And O but it is dear bought that is got at the rate of eternal burnings!

SECONDLY, I shall consider some occasions of this sin, and expose them.

1. Solitude, people dwelling alone, which gives them fair occasion to play their tricks. It is marked of that graceless place Laish, Judg. 18:7 that they were far from neighbours. Such a solitary place we live in; and readily solitude produces either great saints or black devils, as in other things, so particularly uncleanness and thievery; and therefore the night is the thief's time, because of the solitude of it. It is no small business to keep a clean conscience on a hill head or in a glen, or in the black and dark night, where there is an occasion of sinning.

But O consider, that God's eye is on you at all times and in all places! and whatever solitude ye may have to sin in, ye will be called to an account before the throng of the whole world, angels and men, and in broad day-light.

2. Poverty becomes an occasion of it, through the corruption of men's hearts, Prov. 30:8, 9. Graceless poor bodies can hardly think but they have a dispensation to steal.

But surely God, who will not have the persons of the poor respected in judgment, Lev. 19:15 never gave a dispensation to them to steal, but commands them to be content, and to seek for his sake what they have not, and cannot want. Poor thieves are thieves as well as others; and I doubt not but it is that which keeps some always poor, Job 30:3–5. It is true, Solomon says, that as his temptation is stronger, his guilt is less than others, Prov. 6:30; but still he is guilty, ver. 31; and all that can be expected from this is to have a less hot place in hell than others; and that is but cold comfort.

3. Idleness and laziness, Eph. 4:20. There is a generation that will not ply themselves, work and win, and they cannot want, and they must steal. They idle away their time when they might be provided as others, and then the time comes that they cannot want, and they steal from their neighbours what they provided for themselves with the sweat of their brows.

Ye have two sins to account for here, your idleness and stealth; the one will not excuse, but aggravate the other. Ye make yourselves a prey to the devil; and when the devil finds you idle, it is no wonder he puts work in your hands.

4. A fair and easy opportunity meeting with a covetous heart. When there was a wedge of gold lying for the uptaking before Achan, he could not hold in his hands. People that have a mind to steal in such a place, need not go off their own field, or from their own flock, to steal; their neighbour's goods cannot be kept from mixing with theirs, and there is an opportunity to the wish of a covetous heart.

But if people would think with themselves, Now, God in his holy providence is trying me, now the devil is waiting for my ensnaring:

shall I sin because I have an opportunity? May not God send me to hell then, having such an occasion against me?

5. The smallness of the thing. They think it is but a small thing the owner may well enough spare that, it will not do him much harm. It is but this and but that.

But be what it will, it will make thee but a thief for stealing of it. And wilt thou sell thy soul for such a small thing? The way of sin is down the hill; let the devil get in a finger, and he will have in his hand next. He that for a little will sin, will mend his service if the devil will mend his wages. At first perhaps it is but a bit of meat, then a parcel of peats, then a quantity of fodder, and then a sheep, and so on till they come to the gallows here, and to hell hereafter.

6. The difficulty there is in finding it out. It is a work of darkness, which there use not to be witnesses to, and so the man or woman defies the world to make out any such thing against them; and so they go on without controul, boasting like Ephraim, 'He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand; he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said, yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance; in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me, that were sin,' Hos. 12:7, 8.

But O what avails that? Will ye defy the God of heaven, and your own conscience, to make it out before the tribunal? and then ye say something. Till then thou art a criminal before God, and dreadful shall thy doom be. But take heed, they have been discovered that thought themselves secure because no eye saw them. When a man's day comes to fall in such a course, God can infatuate them, that he guides not his matters with common sense.

7. Lastly, Bearing with them. I will not meddle with them says one; I will not meddle with them, says another; let them fall in another's hand, and so on it goes. Justice is neglected, neighbour's are robbed, the souls of the guilty are rained, and others involved in their sin,

that might prevent the progress of it, and will not. It is marked of that Laish, that there was none in it to put it to shame, Judg. 18:7. Respect to men's credit more than to their consciences, is like the tender mercies of the wicked, that are cruel.

THIRDLY, I come now to point out some remedies against this sin.

1. Let the guilty flee to the Lord Jesus Christ, for his blood and Spirit to wash away their guilt, and take away their sin. They are no more beyond the reach of mercy than other gross sinners are. In the catalogue of the Corinthian sinners, were thieves; and yet we are told, that they were washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, 1 Cor. 6:10, 11. Put the covetous heart in his hand, that he may take it away.
2. Labour to awe your hearts with the dread of the all-seeing God whose eye is ever on you; and remember, that for all these things ye do God will bring you into judgment.
3. Labour to be content with your lot, Heb. 13:5. Be content with little, if it be your lot. A little will serve nature, grace will be content with less; but lust will never have enough.
4. Lastly, Lay more stress on the quality than the quantity of what ye have. A little with God's favour, in a righteous way, is better than much with the wrath and curse of God.

SECONDLY, I would dehort from all injustice and unrighteous dealing whatsoever, in all the ways that I have shewn that the eighth commandment may be broken, besides by direct stealing, and any other way whatsoever. Be precisely upright and just in all you do, and do nothing to others that ye would not have done to you. For motives consider,

1. Whatever you gain by any unjust way, it is indirectly stolen, it is stolen in effect. Therefore God forbids all these, under the name of stealing. And there is good reason for it; for no right can be founded

in wrong. Injustice can give no man a title to what is his neighbour's before God; and therefore what you have of him unjustly, is still his, and ye are fraudulent and wrongous possessors of it, as well as if ye had directly stolen it.

2. Just and upright dealing is necessary to prove you to be saints, Psal. 15:1, 2. It is true, it will not prove it alone; men may be just to their neighbours, and yet be no saints. But he can be no saint that makes not conscience of it, be his profession and practice in religion otherwise what it will. This is clear, if you consider,

(1.) Righteousness towards men is an essential part of the image of God, Eph. 4:24, 25. And as the half-image is no image, so piety without righteousness is not God's image, nor true piety. Will God ever regard what we give him, when we make no conscience what we take from our neighbour?

(2.) Without it our service to God is but half-service, Luke 1:74, 75; and that can never be sincere, Psal 119:6. In regeneration, God writes his law on the heart, and not shreds here and there of the first table: so that where righteousness, a principal duty of the second table, is not, the law, of God is not written there.

3. That injustice in professors of religion gives a deep wound to religion itself, Rom. 2:22, 24. And indeed that religion which does not make men just neighbours to deal with, can hardly be thought to make them saints. That craft, cunning, and fraud, used by many, how inconsistent is it with Christian simplicity, the fear of an all-seeing God, and contempt of the world, which religion teaches.

4. How opposite is it to the nature of God, who is just and righteous, and whom we must follow as dear children! The unjust stand in direct opposition to him who cannot but do right. God has a special love in righteousness, Psal. 11 ult. and all injustice is an abomination to him. He has set a particular mark of abhorrence on it, Micah 6:10, 11. 'Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the

wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?' And he has also set a particular delight in just dealing, Prov. 11:1; 'A just weight is his delight.'

5. It brings a blasting curse along with it, Prov. 13:11; 'Wealth gotten by vanity, shall be diminished.' And although it may prosper for a while, it will have a foul hinder end, Prov. 20:21; 'The end thereof shall not be blessed.' It is as a moth in the man's own labours, and sometimes eats away his substance, makes wings to it that it leaves him, and often hurries him away from it. That is a heavy word, Jer. 17:11; 'He that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.'

6. It leaves a sting in the conscience, which will be felt to smart sooner or later. Conscience is the deputy of a just God in the soul, which will be able sometimes to act its part, and both accuse, convince, condemn, and torment the unjust dealer, so that he will be ready to throw away his unjust gain, as willingly as ever one ready to be burnt did live coals out of his bosom, and as Judas did his thirty pieces of silver, though perhaps it may be out of time. A Pythagorean bought a pair of shoes upon trust: the shoemaker dies: the philosopher is glad, and thinks them gain: but a while after his conscience twitches him: he repairs to the house of the dead, casts in his money with these words, 'There, take thy due; thou livest to me, though dead to all besides.'

7. Lastly, It will exclude you out of heaven. There is a bar drawn on all unrighteous persons, that they cannot come there, 1 Cor. 6:9. The treasures of eternal glory are lost by unrighteous dealing in the world, Luke 16:11. Where then is the profit, though a man gain the whole world? It is sad gain where a thousand times more is lost by it. Peace with God and conscience is lost by it; the soul is lost by it, and that for ever. And they who walk not by the rules of justice in the world, shall lie under the strokes of divine justice eternally.

The occasions that ensnare men into stealing might be repeated here, as occasions of other pieces of injustice. But to fence you against this evil, I offer these things.

1. Consider your unrighteous nature, and carry it to Christ to be healed by him. When Adam's nature, and ours in him, was corrupted, it was wholly so, not only with respect to the first, but the second table. There is need, then, that the plaister be as wide as the wound, Eph. 4:24. And he that would remove the bitter streams, must apply to get the fountain sweetened.

2. Accustom yourselves to acknowledge the Lord in your civil Actions, Prov. 3:6. The want of this betrays men into much unfair dealing; for where there is so little of God, there must be much of the devil.

(1.) Eye God in these matters, as he who is your witness, and will be your judge to them. Set the Lord before you in your business, and you will fear to step wrong. May be thou canst wrong thy neighbour, and he shall not know it. But God knows it, and it cannot be hid from him. May be he cannot right himself for want of witnesses; but pray remember, that God and thy own conscience are witnesses to all that passeth betwixt you and others. And though ye may think it is long to that court-day, yet remember that awful declaration, Mal. 3:5. 'I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts.' May be thou canst bear him down from his right, but mind, the wronged party has a strong avenger, 1 Thess. 4:6. O how well might it go, if men in all their bargains, work, neighbourhood, &c. would set God thus before them!

(2.) Eye God in these matters as the fountain of strength. Alas! most men have no diffidence in themselves in these affairs, but trust themselves as in no hazard there, and thus are the betrayers of

themselves, Prov. 28:26. The least of duties are too much for us alone, and in the plainest way we will go wrong, if we be not led right. Satan has snares laid for us in these things; and therefore we have need of strength from the Lord to resist them.

3. Remember ye are not only to seek your own, but your neighbour's welfare, Phil. 2:4. Selfishness is the cause of much unfair dealing. 'Lovers of themselves more than God,' and exclusively of our neighbour, are in bad condition. For a man to build up himself on another's ruins, is contrary to that love which we owe to our neighbour, as fellow-partakers of the human nature, and as members one of another as Christians, Eph. 4:25. The goodness that is most diffusive and communicative, is most like God.

4. Consider the vanity of the world. It is an overvaluing of earthly advantages that leads people aside into unrighteous ways, Hos. 12:8. A due impression of the vanity and emptiness thereof, would let you see that they are not worth a man's going off his way for them. It is not long till very little will serve us; death comes, and we have no more to do with it, a coffin and a winding sheet, and a little room in the heart of the earth, which none will grudge us, will be all we will need. What madness is it, then, to wound the conscience for such a pitiful business? All the gains of unrighteousness will never quite the cost.

5. Labour to mortify the lust of covetousness, which being indulged, the conscience will get sore stretches to satisfy it, Heb. 13:5. It cannot miss to pierce people through with many sorrows. Therefore 'love not the world,' 1 John 3:15; for whoso follow it too closely at the heels, it will dash out their brains at last.

6. A little well gotten is more worth than much otherwise, Prov. 16:8. There is a blessing in the one, a temporal one at least; but there is a curse in the other. A man may use the one with a good conscience; the other is with an ill conscience, and that is a sad sauce to the meal.

The one a man has on free cost, having nothing to pay for it; the sweet of the other is squeezed out by a dear reckoning following.

7. Lastly, Remember the day is coming wherein all wrongs are to be righted, secret things brought to light, and open violence reckoned for. If men were to have no after-reckoning for these things, they might do in them as they list; but thou shalt be countable for the least farthing. The Judge is infinitely wise, and the most cunning and tricky will not get him outwitted nor shifted. He is omnipotent, and they who force their way now through all the bands of justice, shall not be able to make head against him. In all temptation that way, then awe your heart with that meditation, 'What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?' Job 31:14.

OF THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

EXOD. 20:16.—Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

THE scope of this command is the preservation of truth amongst men, which is a necessary bond of human society. And forasmuch as all the commands of the second table relate to ourselves as well as others, the meaning of this is, Thou shalt not bear false witness either against thyself or thy neighbour, and so neither wrong thy own nor thy neighbour's good name.

The positive part of this command is implied in the negative, viz. Thou shalt bear real and soothfast witness (as our law terms it) for thyself and thy neighbour, and so maintain thy own and thy neighbour's good name, so far as truth will allow. This witnessing is to be understood not only of judicial, but extrajudicial witnessing.

Quest. 'What is required in the ninth commandment?' Ans. 'The ninth commandment requireth the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, and of our own and our neighbour's good name, especially in witness-bearing.'

I shall consider this commandment, as it relates,

I. To truth betwixt man and man in general;

II. To our own good name; and,

III. To our neighbour's good name.

I. As it relates to truth betwixt man and man in the general. Truth is a sacred thing, which we are to cleave to as we would to God, who is true essentially, and therefore called truth itself. It was a notable saying of a philosopher, that truth is so great a perfection, that if God

would render himself visible, he would chuse light for his body, and truth for his soul. He was not far out, for the scripture tells us of Christ, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, that he is the light, and the truth. And, on the other hand, it holds out Satan as the prince of darkness and father of lies. And there is a mighty affinity betwixt light and truth, darkness and lies. Truth is to the soul as light is to the body; and they that walk in the light, will walk in truth. Now, this command requires the maintaining of truth. We may take up this in these two things.

1. We must speak truth at all times when we speak, Eph. 4:25; 'Speak the truth every man with his neighbour.' I say when we speak, for we must not be always speaking. Nature having drawn a double bar on our tongues, teaches that our tongues must not be in our mouths as a loose window in the wind, ever clattering. And if discretion keep the key of the door of our lips, we will not be of those that cannot rest till all the truth that is in be out, Prov. 14:33; but we must never speak any thing but truth.

What is truth? Pilate asked the question at Christ, but did not stay for an answer, John 18:38. Truth is a harmony, a double harmony. Anatomists observe, that the tongue in man is tied by a double string to the heart. To speaking of truth is required, (1.) A harmony of the tongue with the heart. (2.) A harmony of the tongue with the thing itself.

(1.) If we think not as we speak, we do not speak truth; the discord betwixt the tongue and the heart mars the harmony, Psal. 15:2. We must speak as we think, then, and the tongue must be a faithful interpreter of the mind, otherwise it is a false tongue. So truth may be spoken by a man, and yet he be a false speaker, because he thinks not as he speaks.

(2.) But that is not all: if we do not speak also as the thing in itself is, we do not speak true. For there must be a harmony betwixt our hearts and the thing as it is in itself. For we must not think that our

mistaken apprehensions of things can stamp lies to pass current for truths, just because we think them so, 2 Thess. 2:11.

The sum of the matter lies here: It is our duty to speak truth, that is, so as our mind agree with the matter, and our mouth with our mind. We must speak things as we think them to be, and think them to be what they are. And hence we may see that modesty is very necessary to preserve us in the truth, in this our weak and dark condition. Self-conceited ignorance, and weakness joined with confidence, whereby people are so peremptory in their own uptakings of things, without any regard to the different light of others, is a great enemy to truth.

2. We must especially speak the truth at sometimes, that is, in witness-bearing. This is twofold.

1st, Witness-bearing in judgment. This command requires us to bear witness, and that faithfully, when called thereto. Now, we are to speak the truth judicially, when we are lawfully called thereunto, by the authority, whether of church or state.

2dly, Extrajudicial witness-bearing, wherein a man is called to declare the truth, though there be no human authority obliging him thereto, as often falls out in the case of private controversies betwixt neighbours, where a third person is desired to witness the truth. Yea, a man may be obliged to this witness-bearing where he is not so much as desired to speak, as when we hear our neighbour charged with any thing unjustly, we are obliged to vindicate his innocency, it being known to us.

Now, the rule in both these cases is this, that then is a man or a woman called to declare the truth under the pain of God's displeasure, when God's glory or their neighbour's good may be procured by it; when the dishonour of God and their neighbour's hurt, either of soul, body, name, or goods, may be avoided by it.

Both these sorts of witness-bearing are necessary for the maintaining and promoting of truth, the honour of God, and our neighbour's real

good, though it appear perhaps to be for his hurt, in discovering his wickedness, or the wrong done by him, Zech. 8:16.

In judicial witness-bearing, God calls men to witness the truth, by the mouth of those to whom he has given authority, making them either gods, or ambassadors for God on the earth. And therefore to decline it in that case, is to decline the divine call, and mar the course of justice, Isa. 59:14; and so the honour of God and the good of our neighbour.

And in the other case there is a real call from the Lord unto it, as we tender his honour and our neighbour's welfare.

Neither ought people to scare at witness-bearing judicially, because of the oath of God; for a lawful oath, imposed by lawful authority, for the honour of God and the good of our neighbour, is a duty whereby we worship and glorify our God, Jer. 4:2. Now, in this case of witness-bearing,

1. It is our duty to tell the truth; and, (1.) Not to conceal it, or any part of it known to us, which may make for the clearing of the matter in question, 2 Sam. 14:18, 19, 20; that is, to tell it fully. (2.) Freely, not being awed by any person, or any evil that may thereby come unto us by the guilty or otherwise, 1 Sam. 19:4, 5. (3.) Clearly, not mincing, obscuring, and wrapping up the truth, so as they who hear it know not what to make of it, Josh. 7:19. (4.) Sincerely, 2 Chron. 19:9; without any influence of malice, or partial counsel, without feud or favour.

2. It is our duty to tell nothing but the truth; that were to bear false witness with a witness indeed. Truth stands in no need of lies to support it, Prov. 6:19.

II. As it relates to our own good name, we are to maintain and promote it. It should be every body's care to procure and maintain their reputation; for a good name is a very precious thing, which we should love and be careful of, Prov. 22:1. And they who value not

their reputation, will hardly be found to value either their souls or bodies. Now, it must be cared for and maintained in words, and by deeds.

First, In words, and that these three ways.

1. By speaking nothing but the truth concerning ourselves. They that seek a name to themselves by lying and boasting, ordinarily lose what they have, instead of getting more, Prov. 25:14. And they that would preserve their name, let them be careful of their word, to fulfil their lawful promises, Psal. 15:4.

2. By concealing prudently those secrets concerning ourselves which we are not obliged to discover. They sin against God and themselves who unnecessarily give another their reputation to keep, Prov. 25:9, 10; 'Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another; lest he that heareth it, put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.' This is not to be extended to the concealing of scandalous sins, which people are lawfully called to confess: for in that case the name of a confessing penitent is better than that of an obstinate scandalous sinner, Prov. 28:13; 'He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.'

3. By defending our good name when it is unjustly attacked, as our Lord did, when he said to the Jews, 'I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me,' John 8:49. It is a tender point to be wounded in; and if it be done wrongously, we are enemies to ourselves, if we use not all means competent to clear ourselves.

Secondly, By deeds, we are to care for it practically.

1. If we would maintain our good name, let us not do evil things. An ill name will follow an ill life; who can help it? If a man steal, let him thank himself that his good name is lost. A vile practice will at length make a man's name stink.

2. We must not do what is like evil, 1 Thess. 5:22. They who take a liberty to themselves in suspicious practices, throw away their own reputation. And if they be innocent as to gross things, they are in the nearest disposition to be guilty. We should follow the apostle in this case, Phil. 4:8. 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise think on these things.' Julius Cæsar having divorced his wife, was called to witness against her; and being interrogated, declared he knew nothing of the business; and being asked, Why then he had put her away? Because, said he, I would have all my relations as free from the suspicion as the guilt of a bad action.

III. As it relates to our neighbour's good name. We are to maintain, and promote it too, as far as is consistent with truth. And for this cause there is required of us,

1. A charitable opinion and esteem of our neighbours, 1 Cor. 13:7; being ready to hope the best of them, unless the contrary be evident.

2. A desire of, and rejoicing in, their good name and reputation, Rom. 1:8. We are to love them as ourselves, and therefore should be glad of the sweet savour of their name, though their reputation outshine ours.

3. Sorrowing and grieving for their faults, 2 Cor. 12:21. The blasting of any body's name by their sins, should make us mourn, and the rather that the same root of bitterness is in all naturally: and they are the deeper in God's debt that get through the world with an unblemished reputation.

4. Covering their infirmities with the mantle of love, 1 Pet. 4:8. Every body has some weak side, and needs a cover from others in love: and it is a dangerous business to aggravate and blaze abroad this to their dishonour.

5. Freely acknowledging the gifts and graces that are in any, 1 Cor. 1:4–7. As none are so good but they have some discernible infirmity, so hardly is one so bad but there is some one thing or another praiseworthy in them. And if it were but one thing, it is our duty frankly to own it.

6. Defending their innocence, as Ahimelech did David's, 1 Sam. 22:14; 'Who is so faithful,' says he 'among all thy servants, as David, which is the king's son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house?' It is necessary and just to defend the innocent, especially if absent, against the poisonous bites of a viperous tongue lest we be held consenting to the tongue-murder of him, in God's account.

7. An unwillingness to receive an ill report of them, and a readiness to admit a good report of them, 1 Cor. 13:6, 7. Psal. 15:3. Love readily opens the door to a good report of our neighbour, but is not very hasty to let in an evil one, being truly sorry if it should be true.

8. Discouraging tale bearers, flatterers, and slanderers, who go about gathering all the filth they can find to throw upon the name and reputation of others. These should be discouraged as the pests of human society, as David did, 'Whose privily slandereth his neighbour,' says he, 'him will I cut off,' Psal. 101:5.

9. Lastly, Watching over one another giving sound and seasonable admonitions, checks, and reproofs, for what is ill or ill like in others, Lev. 19:17; and telling themselves of it, so as it may not be blabbed out without necessity: whereby both their souls might be timely preserved from the snare, and their good name preserved too.

Having thus given a view of the duties required in the ninth commandment, I proceed to consider what is forbidden in it.

Quest. 'What is forbidden in the ninth commandment?'

Ans. 'The ninth commandment forbiddeth whatsoever is prejudicial to truth, or injurious to our own or our neighbour's good name.'

The sins forbidden in this commandment are here reduced to three heads.

1. Whatsoever is prejudicial to truth.
2. Whatsoever is prejudicial to our own good name.
3. Whatsoever is prejudicial to our neighbour's good name.

These I shall consider in order.

I. This command forbids whatsoever is prejudicial to truth. The God of truth has set this command as a hedge and fence about truth, that it be not wronged. For it cannot be prejudiced but by the same means that we wrong God and our neighbour too. Now there are two cases in which truth is apt to suffer hurt.

First, Judicially, in judgment, in judicatories, whether ecclesiastical or civil. There truth is to make its most solemn appearance, Zech. 8:16; and lies there are most sinful. The judges judge for God, and so the solemnity of the thing ought to strike the greater awe on all to do or say nothing prejudicial to truth. Now truth is prejudiced in judgment, and this command broken,

1. By judges when they pervert judgment, respecting persons, and passing unjust sentences, Prov. 17:15 calling evil good, and good evil, and rewarding the righteous as the wicked, and the wicked as the righteous: and iniquitous laws can never bear men out in this, Isa. 5:23 and 10:1.

2. By the complainer, while he falsely accuses or charges another, Luke 19:8; forges writs, Psal. 119:69; or suborns false witnesses, Acts 6:13.

3. By the defender, when he denies a just charge, being called to a free confession, Prov. 28:13. And seeing judges are set to judge for the Lord, this must be reckoned a lying to the Lord.

4. By the witnesses, and that when they either conceal the truth, not discovering freely and fully what they know, or when they tell any thing that is not truth, Lev. 5:1. Prov. 19:9. And thus people may prejudice truth, when they keep up what might make the truth appear, and the cause go right in judgment.

5. Lastly, By the pleaders, while they appear for an unjust cause to bear down truth and justice, Acts 24:2, &c.

Secondly, Extrajudicially, in common conversation and otherwise. Wheresoever we go, we should carry truth along with us; but out of judgment truth is often prejudiced; and that these three ways.

1. By unfaithfulness in conversation, when people slip the bond of their word, and make nothing of breaking lawful promises, Rom. 1:31. A man ought to value his word highly, as a man, and much more as a Christian. That is a sad complaint 'There is no truth in the land,' Hos. 4:1; when men do with their promises as an ape with its collar, slipping it on and off as it sees meet.

2. By undue silence. Strange is the disorder that sin has brought into the world; as in the tongue, which is often going when it should be quiet, and often quiet when it should speak. Our tongues are our glory; but they are often found wrapt up in a dark cloud of silence, when they should be shining forth. Truth is prejudiced by silence, when the honour of God, or the good of our neighbour, either in the way of justice, or charity, calls for the discovery of it. Thus men sin against God, the truth, and their neighbour, when they hold their peace, (1.) When iniquity calls for a reproof from them. (2.) When it calls for a complaint to, or giving information thereof, unto others, Lev. 5:1. Deut. 13:8. God has given men a tongue as a banner to be displayed for him. To run away then with flying colours, in such a

case, is very dishonourable to God, and dangerous to ourselves, Mark 8:38. It is most injurious to our neighbour, whom we think so to gratify, being a snare to his soul, Lev. 19:17; and to ourselves, by involving us in their guilt, Eph. 5:7, 11.

3. By undue speaking. The world is a world of iniquity, and several ways speaks to the prejudice of truth. Truth may be prejudiced thus,

(1.) By speaking it unseasonably. Truth hath suffered much prejudice by the unseasonable venting of it: therefore people must take heed, not only what but when they speak; for 'there is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak,' Eccl. 3:7; 'A fool uttereth all his mind; but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards,' Prov. 29:11.

(2.) By speaking truth maliciously, as Doeg did. It was both unseasonable, while Saul was in a rage against David, 1 Sam. 22:8, 9; and malicious, Psal. 52:2, 3. This is the way how the devil speaks truth; as he stirred up the damsel possessed with a spirit of divination, to cry concerning Paul and Silas, 'These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation,' Acts 16:16, 17; and this very maliciously, as the context shews.

(3.) By perverting truth to a wrong meaning, as the false witnesses did against Christ, Matth. 26:60, 61. What he spoke of his body, they turned it to the temple of Jerusalem. So it is not enough that we speak truth, but it must be seasonable and charitable too.

4. By equivocal expressions to the prejudice of truth or justice; in which the sense goes doubtfully, either true or false. Of the same nature are mental reservations. Thus Isaac sinned in denying his wife, and calling her his sister, Gen. 26:7, 9. They are indeed lies, an untruth, spoken with an intention to deceive; for words must be taken according to the common use of them, and answers are understood as given according to the question. The devil, who is the father of lies, brought this manner of speaking into the world, Gen.

3:5 and that way he was wont to deliver his oracles; for he never speaks truth, but either maliciously or equivocally, as he moved the false prophets to speak in the affair of Ahab's going up to Ramoth-Gilead, 1 Kings 22:6, 12.

5. Lastly, By lies, Eph. 4:25. Lying is prejudicial to truth, as darkness to light, and is from the devil. But observe some speeches that are like lies, but are not so.

(1.) Figurative speeches, though not literally true, are not lies, as Christ's calling himself a vine, John 15:1. Of this sort are allegories and fables, such as Jotham's parable, Judg. 9:8; parables, Luke 16; hyperbolic speeches, John 12 ult; ironical speeches, Gen. 3:22. 1 Kings 18:27. In the former the sense and meaning of them is agreeable to truth, and fables and parables are a sort of speech by pictures. In irony the gesture readily explains the meaning, 1 Kings 22:15.

(2.) The telling a part of the truth, and concealing another part of it, when there is no obligation on us from the honour of God or our neighbour to discover it, is not lying, 1 Sam. 16:2; for though we are never to tell but the truth, yet we are not always obliged to tell all the truth.

(3.) Speeches according to present intention, without prejudicing further liberty, as when one at table refuses such a thing, yet changes his mind, and takes it, or on importunity yields, as Gen. 19:2, 3. 2 Cor. 1:17.

Lastly, Threatenings not executed when the condition understood is done, and promises not fulfilled when the condition is not performed. Now, these being set aside, consider,

1. Sometimes, though the words agree with the mind of the speaker, yet not with the thing itself. This is called a material lie, or an untruth, and is sinful, as disagreeing with the truth, Isa. 59:13.

2. If the words agree not with the mind of the speaker, that is a formal lie, the tongue speaking contrary to what the mind thinks. Lies are of four sorts.

1. Jestling lies; that is, when a person speaks that which is contrary to the known truth, in a jesting or ludicrous way; and embellishes his discourse with his own fictions, designing thereby to impose on others. This they are guilty of who invent false news, or tell stories for truth, which they know to be false, by way of amusement. Hosea complains of this practice, chap. 7:3. 'They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.'

2. Officious lies; that is, when one speaks that which is contrary to truth, and the dictates of his conscience, to do good to himself or others thereby, or with a design to cover a fault, or excuse ourselves or others, Job 13:7. 'Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him?' Rom. 3:8.

3. Pernicious lies; that is, when a person raises and spreads a false report with a design to do mischief to another. This is a complicated crime, and the worst species of this sin, a thing which is an abomination to the Lord, Prov. 6:17.

4. Rash lies; that is, when a person uttereth that which is false through surprise, inadvertency, and customary looseness, as in the case of the tidings brought to David, that Absalom had slain all the king's sons at the entertainment he had provided for them at Baal-hazor, 2 Sam. 13:30.

Concerning all these species of lying, we may say, that God is a God of truth, but the devil, the father of lies, who incites men to imitate him in this ancient hellish trade, by which he destroyed the founders of the human race; that the word of God expressly condemns every kind of untruth; and that people should never reckon that a small thing which will land the transgressors in hell, Rev. 21:8.

II. This command forbids whatsoever is injurious to our own good name. We ought all to be very careful of our reputation, and not to bear false witness for or against ourselves. Now, people may be guilty of the breach of this command with respect to themselves,

1. In their hearts, either by thinking too meanly of themselves, or too highly. Though people can never be too humble, yet they may be too blind to what God has done, for them; and there may be a great deal of bastard self-denial, which hinders men to be thankful to God, and useful to others, as in the case of Moses, Exod. 4:10–14. But the most dangerous extreme is thinking too highly of ourselves, Rom. 12:16. This is a most dangerous piece of false witness, which the false heart gives in favour of self.

2. In their actions, when people either do evil, or that which at least is evil-like. When Eli's sons lost their tenderness, and gave themselves to debauchery, they lost their good name. An unsavoury report followed their vicious and base life, 1 Sam. 2:24. And there are such things as are of evil report, suspicious practices, evil-like things, that though they be not the worst of things, yet they make way for them; by these, persons throw away their good name, Prov. 5:8, 9 and witness against themselves, that they are untender and vicious persons, in a near disposition to the greatest evil.

3. In words. And thus men may be guilty by,

(1.) Bearing witness against themselves unnecessarily, without a due call, discovering their own secret faults and infirmities, especially to those who have no true sense of piety, but are ready to improve the same to the reproach of them, or of religion, or both, Prov. 25:9, 10. 'Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another: lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.'

(2.) Bearing false witness against ourselves, as accusing ourselves unjustly, denying the gifts and graces of God in us, as Job says, chap.

27:5, 6. 'God forbid that I should justify you: till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.' Pride often puts people on this, that they may appear the more humble. But humility never teaches men to rob God of his praise, or to lie against the truth. Lying against our minds can never be good, though it seem to humble us.

(3.) Bearing false witness for ourselves. Thus people are guilty, upon being duly called to confess their sins, they deny them, hide them, and, over the belly of their conscience, cause their tongues witness for them, Prov. 28:13: 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.' It is sad witnessing when the conscience within tells people they are lying.

Of this sort is vain-glorious boasting and bragging. There are some, who, when they speak of themselves, are sure to speak very big, as the Pharisee did, Luke 18:11. A man or woman that is a boaster, will be found to be a liar ordinarily. They will boast of what they have not, or of doing what they never did, Prov. 25:14. 'Whoso boasteth of a false gift, is like clouds and wind without rain.' Yea, some will accuse themselves of wickedness which they did not commit, for the pleasure that they take in boasting of mischief. And where the man has any ground to walk on in his boasting, he is a liar in magnifying it, as was the case of the Pharisee, Luke 18:12. It was one of the basest offices for a man to trumpet his own praise: It is a great evidence there is little in him, that he makes so much noise with it. Such are in the black roll, 2 Tim. 3:2.

III. I come now to consider this command as it forbids what is injurious to our neighbour and his good name. We may contract guilt in injuring our neighbour, over the belly of this command, several ways.

First, In our hearts; for all the commands of God reach to the heart as well as the outward man. We are injurious in our hearts to our

neighbour's good name, by,

1. Unjust suspicions of him, 1 Tim. 6:4. Thus Potiphar injured Joseph, suspecting him of that villainy which he was far from. Christ bids us beware of men, and so not to be credulous. But there is a medium betwixt vain credulity and evil groundless suspicion, which fills men's heads with a foresight of what others will do when they have such and such temptations, from no light but that of their own uncharitable spirits.

2. Uncharitable judging and condemning of others in our hearts, Matth. 7:1. The prevailing of the censorious humour amongst us, is a speaking evidence of this waspish disposition, which is a compound of pride, rashness, harshness, lightness, and emptiness, directly opposite to the love and charity that we owe to our neighbours, which 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things,' 1 Cor. 13:7. I grant, that to call an evil action an evil thing, and an habitual grossly profane life a mark of a profane heart, is no breach of charity, Gal. 5:19. But to lash men in our hearts, beyond what the habitual frame of their lives gives ground for, is that uncharitable judging.

It is the product of pride and self-conceit; for the man makes himself the rule, so all that is beyond him, or does not reach his length, must fall under his condemnatory sentence; he invades the throne of God, setting up one for himself in his neighbour's heart, not confining himself to his outward actions, Rom. 14:10. It is rashness, flowing from want of consideration; it is harshness, carrying their judgment farther than the matter will bear; it is lightness and emptiness, for they are confident of that which really they do not know. How confident were the barbarians, upon seeing the viper fasten on Paul's hand, that he was a murderer! &c. Acts 28:4. Thus men condemn the actions of others, merely from their own rashness, as Eli did Hannah; and, which is worst of all, they will judge their state before God from things utterly unable to bear the weight of their presumptuous sentence, as Job's friends did; and thrust in

themselves to the secrets of their hearts, as those mentioned, Rom. 14:4. 'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?' V judging their consciences: the like whereto was the horrible judgment some have expressed touching those that took the oath of abjuration, that they had gone over the belly of their conscience, and in other cases too. If you think that I am speaking for it, ye are uncharitable: but I would not for the world judge other men's consciences at that rate. It is sufficient for me to condemn men's evil actions which I see, not to judge their consciences, which I neither see nor can see. Were the impressions of the tremendous tribunal of God more on men's spirits, they would not be so hasty to judge before the time.

3. Misconstructing others, their intentions, words, and actions. No innocence can be a safeguard against that temper, which is always ready to give the worst turn to the intentions, words, and actions of their neighbour, which they are capable to bear. It is like the corrupted stomach, that corrupts whatever is put into it. See Neh. 6:6. Rom. 3:8. Psal. 69:10.

4. Contempt of others in our hearts, undervaluing and thinking basely of them; when men stop their eyes from beholding whatever is praise-worthy in their neighbour, and gather together what makes against them, and sit brooding on that. This is evil in all cases, but especially where men condemn others for what is good in them, 2 Sam. 6:16. We are even in our hearts to give every one their due; and so far as we with-hold it, we are guilty, Luke 18:9, 10, 11.

5. Envy and grieving at the just and deserved credit or reputation of any. This is a most unchristian and truly Pharisaical temper, Matt. 21:15. It is the nature of envy to torment a man with the good of his neighbour. What refreshes the charitable spirit, vexes and frets theirs. They are like the moon that turns pale and wan whensoever the sun begins to shine above the horizon. But if men loved their neighbour as themselves, and their God more than themselves, they would rejoice at their neighbour's reputation, though it should outshine our own, Numb. 11:29.

6. Rejoicing in the disgrace and infamy of others, Jer. 48:27. This is a devil-like sin, for dust is the serpent's meat. Whatever mischief befalls men is the devil's delight: and so there are many, that if a black cloud be thrown over the reputation of others, it tickles their hearts, they have a secret satisfaction in it; their hearts say within them, Aha! so we would have it. And many vent their satisfaction in outward rejoicing at it.

7. Lastly, Fond admiration of men, Jude. 16. As the former are sins in defect, so this is a sin in excess. And indeed we become guilty by thinking too highly and above what is meet of any man, as well as thinking too meanly of them, 1 Cor. 4:6. This is both a sin and a snare: for those whom we fondly admire, we are apt to imitate in evil as well as good, and so to follow them to the prejudice of truth. It is a sad evidence of the corruption of a man's heart, that he is ready either to idolize or else to despise others.

Secondly, In our lives and actions. Men may injure the good name of others without speaking a word against them.

1. Men may be guilty of the breach of this command, to the prejudice of their neighbour's good name, by bare gesture of the body, Prov. 6:13. 'He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers.' A man may with a wink, a nod, a grave look, a sigh, &c. stab another's reputation, filling others by these means with suspicions of him unjustly; or when one is slandered in our presence, making such signs as import our consent thereto.

2. Drawing others into things that are ill or evil-like, and of bad report. Thus many ruin one another's reputation, till they are as rotten things laid one upon another, which corrupt each other, till both send forth a stinking smell, Matth. 18:7. They that lay the stumbling-block, and they that fall over it, are both ruined together, though double vengeance abides them who ruin others together with themselves.

3. By not hindering what we can in others those things that procure an ill name. The evil that befalls others which we might have prevented, will justly be laid at our door. This brought the judgments of God on good Eli and his house too, so that they went all to ruin together, 1 Sam. 3:13. The Spirit of God records, for the justification of poor Tamar, the care she had of preventing the ill name of herself and of Amon, 2 Sam. 13:12, 13. So that neither by terror nor allurements she could be drawn into the villainy, though she was forced, which was her misery, but not her sin.

Thirdly, In our lips. The tongue is the principal mischievous instrument whereby people ruin or wound the good name of others. And here come in the sins of the tongue against our neighbour in a special manner. Thus men injure their neighbour,

1. By silence, when they forbear to speak what they ought and can for the credit of their neighbour. Thus men may wrong others by their silence in their neighbour's cause while he is aspersed, Prov. 31:8 for in that case silence is consent. As also when their neighbour is justly commended, the entertaining thereof with silent looks, as if they knew something that may justly mar his reputation. If that be not the sense of it, it reflects on the silent person as grudging the reputation of the person commended.

2. Our neighbour may be injured by sinful speaking; and this command may be broken many ways.

(1.) By unnecessary discovering of the faults and infirmities of others. O how much guilt is contracted this way, by people's going in the way of cursed Ham, Gen. 9:22 unvailing instead of vailing the weaknesses of others, without any necessity, but to the lessening of their reputation.

(2.) By aggravating their lesser faults, Matth. 7:3, 4, 5. Men see motes like beams in the eyes of others, while beams are as motes in their own. It is a mischievous tongue that, counting the faults of others, for

fifty sets down a hundred, and still looks to them through a magnifying glass. Had we the dexterity of aggravating our own as we have of aggravating the faults of others, we would be happy, because very humble people.

(3.) By reviving the memory of our neighbour's crimes which were worn out of mind, especially being repented of. Thus many vent their malice against others by casting up their former faults to them, as Shimei did to David. Truth it may be, but it is uncharitably and maliciously spoken, for which the speaker must give an account to God.

(4.) By betraying secrets committed to us. It is true, if the honour of God and the good of our neighbour require the discovering of a secret, in that case, as we ought not to promise, so we ought not to conceal it. But when we have lawfully promised to keep it, either expressly or tacitly, we sin against truth, justice, and friendship, to betray it. And though there be no promise in the case, yet when the revealing of it tends to the detriment of our neighbour, it is sinful, Prov. 17:9. 2 Tim. 3:4.

(5.) By detracting, or endeavouring any manner of way to impair the deserved credit of our neighbour, Ezek. 4:12, 13. This is the native result of envy and ill-will at our neighbour; for those who cannot endure others to sit on high, where they are deservedly placed, will go about one way or other to undermine them.

(6.) By evil reports to the prejudicing of our neighbour unjustly. In these many are involved in guilt. [1.] The raiser of it, Exod. 23:1. Satan has the mouths of many at command for a forge of ill reports, who strike that hellish coin with their stamp, that it may pass for current. [2.] The receivers and spreaders of it, who are guilty here as well as the raiser; for they are to the raiser as the receiver is to the thief: Report, say they, and we will report. If others will gather filth, they will throw it on their neighbours' faces, and yet are not innocent, though they can give their authors, Neh. 6:6. See Psal. 15:3.

(7.) By slandering, which is an ill report without all ground, Psal. 50:20. This is the venom of a wretched tongue, made use of to kill and bury alive the innocent. It has been the trial of the people of God in general, and seldom if ever do any of them escape without it. Satan loves by his agents to vomit out against them reproaches and slanders, wherewith their good name may be blasted, and especially if religion and the cause of God can be wounded through their sides. The scourge of the tongue is a sharp scourge.

(8.) By backbiting and whispering, Rom. 1:29, 30. Both agree in that they speak evil behind men's back, accusing them, and loading them with reproach when they are not present to answer for themselves. The backbiter does it openly, and the whisperer does it secretly.

(9.) By tale-bearing, Lev. 19:16. This is a sort of pedlar-trade for the devil, driven by many whose work it is to carry tales out of the house or company where they happen to be; and these are the wares they have to vent in other houses or companies, where they will be ready to take up new clashes and tales to where they go next. These are the plagues of society, like Satan sowing discord among brethren. Hence secret grudge against one another, and none knows wherefore; and when they are searched to the furthest, it is all grounded on some talebearer's credit.

(10.) By countenancing and encouraging the black tribe of slanderers, backbiters, &c. Prov. 29:12. If these merchants for hell got not their wares taken off their hands, they would be ashamed of their trade, and forced to quit it. But many are as ready to take them off their hands as they are to deliver them.

(11.) By stopping our ears against the just defence of the parties lesed, as the malicious Jews did against Stephen, Acts 7:57, 58. How rare is it to find a person as ready to receive a defence for, as an accusation against their neighbour?

(12.) By scornful contempt, and scoffing, and mocking others. This was the way of Ishmael's persecuting of Isaac, Gal. 4:29. These viperous tongues work upon the miseries of others, as the soldiers did at Christ in his sufferings, Matth. 27:28, 29. The natural imperfections of others are their sport, though reproaching the poor they despise his Maker; yea, and their sinful imperfections too, for fools make a mock at sin.

Some have a mighty fondness for gibing and taunting; their whole converse runs that way, to make others uneasy and themselves merry with their taunts. Let them not value themselves on their talent; if any spark of tenderness be left in them, I doubt if they dare look to it as a good gift given them from above, but as an abuse of the good gift of God. It was Ishmael's way, for which he was cast out of the family of the faithful, Gal. 4:29.

(13.) Reviling and railing, giving others reproachful and opprobrious names, piercing them with bitter words, and murdering them with their tongues, Matth. 5:22. 1 Cor. 6:10. Revilers are among those excluded out of heaven.

These are some of the ways how the wicked tongue gives home-thrusts to others, and pierces like the piercing of the sword, following the example of him who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. But would ye see them all gathered together in one, ye have them in,

(14.) Lastly, Scolding and rating, an abominable disorder which we are so much disturbed with. There their wicked hearts, stirred up with passion and revenge, vomit out all at once this filthy stuff. For there their neighbour's faults are unnecessarily discovered, aggravated, &c. as if hell's forces were rendezvousing betwixt them. Wonder not at the expression. See Jude. 9. No, the angel durst not engage Satan with these weapons, whereof he was the proper master, and at which none can outdo him. If ye take not better heed to your tongues, they will ruin you, Psal. 52:2-5.

There are some other evils of the tongue here forbidden, the hurt whereof does not so plainly appear.

1. Talkativeness, or much speaking. Some are ever talking, and are never in their element but when prattling; and when once they loose, it is as hard to stop them as to stop a flood, and turn it another way. Of it I say,

(1.) It is a sign of a loose and frothy heart, where the fear of God hath little place, Eccl. 5:2; for that would make our words few, true, weighty, and useful. When God has given us two ears, and but one tongue, that we may be swift to hear and slow to speak, it is a pregnant evidence of a naughty heart, to be swift to speak and slow to hear.

(2.) It is the fool's badge, Eccl. 5:3. Talkative persons, for want of acquaintance with themselves, thinking to shew themselves wise, ordinarily present a fool to the company. They will have a flood of words, who have hardly a drop of good sense or judgment; so that they are just a voice, and no more. They that are given to much speaking, can hardly speak either true or well; which made an orator ask a double fee of a talkative scholar, one to learn him to speak well, another to learn him to hold his peace. It is the character of a virtuous woman, that 'she openeth her mouth with wisdom,' Prov. 31:26. Her month is not always open, but duly shut, and discreetly opened.

2. Idle speaking, Matth. 12:36. The tongue was given to man to be for the honour of God, and the good of himself and neighbour, Though our words, then, be not evil in themselves, they are evil because they are idle; that is, words spoken to no good purpose, tending neither to the honour of God nor the good of ourselves or others, neither to his moral good, to make him more holy, nor to his civil good, as not being upon the necessary concerns of human life, nor his natural good, to maintain the moderate cheerfulness of society. It may be comprehended under foolish talking, rash, raving, and impertinent

discourse, doing no good to the hearers, but bewraying the folly of the speaker.

3. A trade of jesting, Eph. 5:4. It is not sinful to pass an innocent jest for begetting of moderate cheerfulness. The wise man tells us, 'There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh, Eccl. 3:4. It may in some cases be necessary to cheer the spirits, as a cordial is to restore them, or a pleasant gale of wind to purify the air. It was not unbecoming the gravity of the prophet to mock Baal's priests, and to say, 'Cry aloud; for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey; or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened,' 1 Kings 18:27. But sinful are,

(1.) Offensive jests, which tend to the shewing a despising of our neighbour, to the irritating or provoking of him. And indeed it is often seen, that those who are much given that way, their conversation is most offensive, sparing neither friend nor foe, and will rather lose their friend than their jest.

(2.) Profane jests, either making a mock of sin, or of that which is holy, particularly wresting and abusing scripture, to express the conceits of their light and wanton wits. It is a dangerous thing to jest in such matters.

(3.) People's being immoderate in jesting. To make every word a jest is liker the stage than Christian gravity. This is as absurd as to present a man a dish of salt to feed on; a little of it is good for seasoning, but to give it for the whole entertainment, is absurd.

4. Lastly, Flattery, Psal. 12:3. This is a most dangerous stroke, and the more deadly that the wound it gives does not smart, but by it a man is hugged to ruin. The words of a flatterer are smoother than oil, yet are they in effect as drawn swords. It is a compound of lying, abjectness of spirit, and treachery. The flatterer gives the praise that is not due, professes the kindness that is not real, and screws up all to a pitch far above truth; and so he is a liar. He debases himself to

please others, turning himself into every shape to humour the party he is to flatter; and betrays him into self-conceit and unacquaintedness with himself.

I shall shut all with a twofold dehortation.

First, Speak truth, and beware of lying. Lying is a very common sin; repent of that guilt, and beware of it for the future. For motives, consider,

Mot. 1. That God is the God of truth, the Author and Lover of truth, so that he cannot lie; and therefore lying is most contrary to the nature and mind of God: it is therefore singularly abominable and hateful to him, Psal. 10:5. Prov. 6:16, 17. We find that God suffered Adam's sons to marry their own sisters, and the Israelites to spoil the Egyptians of what they had borrowed of them; but never did the God of truth at any time dispense with men's speaking lies. Hate that abominable thing, then, which God so hates.

2. All lies are from the devil in a special manner, John 8:44. It was he that first broached lies in the world, ruined mankind with them; and having sped so well with that engine of hell at first, no wonder he sets himself to keep up the trade. He is the father of lies, that begets them in the false heart, and they are brought forth by the lying tongue. Whom do liars resemble then, the God of truth, or the father of lies?

3. Lying is a part of the old man of sin, which must be put off, if we would not be put out of God's presence, Eph. 4:24, 25. It is the way to which our corrupt natures do kindly and quickly incline, Psal. 58:3; 'The wicked go astray as soon as they be borne, speaking lies.' Hence children are not to learn this; they have the art of it from their first father Adam. But as soon as grace enters the heart, it rectifies it in that point. Hence the Lord's people are called 'children that will not lie,' Isa. 63:8.

4. There is a meanness or baseness in lying beyond what is in other common sins, either because it proceeds from fear, or tends to

deceive. Hence liars themselves cannot endure to be called liars; the baseness of the sin being so much acknowledged in the world, that though many bring forth and cherish the vile brat, none can endure to be reputed the father of it. And no wonder it is reputed such a base thing; for when once a man is known to make no conscience of truth, he has lost his credit, and is looked upon as a man that cannot be bound with the common ties of society, nor trusted.

Lastly, It will bring God's wrath heavily on the guilty, Prov. 19:5, 9. A false witness shall not go unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape. A false witness shall not be unpunished; and he that speaketh lies shall perish.' God's truth is impawned for the liar's destruction, even eternal destruction. Shall liars have access to heaven? No, they are barred out from thence, Rev. 21 ult. 'There shall in nowise enter into it any thing that—maketh a lie.' Their lodging is appointed to them in another place, with the devil the father of lies, in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, Rev. 21:8 and 22:15.

I shall give you a few advices.

1. Strike at the root of lying, and so the fruit will wither and come to nought. The great root of all is the corrupt nature, that needs to be mortified by grace from Jesus Christ. There are also particular lusts on which lies depend. Labour to be humble, for pride and self-seeking occasions many lies, as the boaster's lie. Some are founded on covetousness, as the lies in bargaining; some in fear, slavish fear of men, as denying truth; some in the vanity and rashness of our natures, whereby lies come to be broached without a formed design.
2. Accustom yourselves to few words, for 'in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin,' Prov. 10:19. It is but just with God, that idle words be punished by suffering people to fall into lying words.
3. Remember that God will discover truth; and that his eye is upon you at all times. And though ye may deceive others with your lies, ye cannot deceive the omniscient God. He is witness to the truth, and

will call you to account for your contradicting it. And indeed the trade of lying is hard to keep up without discovery. Liars had need of good memories. 'A lying tongue is but for a moment,' Prov. 12:19.

Lastly, Curb lying in young ones, out of pity to their souls, and care of their credit when they come to years. For some get such a habit of it when they are young, that there is no mending of them when they grow old.

Secondly, Beware of carrying an evil tongue. The lying tongue is contrary to truth, the evil tongue to charity and love to our neighbour, being employed in slandering, backbiting, reproaching, reviling, scolding, &c. For motives,

Mot. 1. Consider the woful perverseness that is in an evil tongue. God gave man speech, which he denied to other creatures, that by his tongue he might glorify God, and do good to himself and others, Psal. 57:9, 10. Shall we thus turn our glory into shame, and pervert the ends of speech? How just were it that we were struck dumb?

2. It is a murdering instrument. I observed to you before, that an ill tongue is a parcel of murdering weapons, a bow and sharp arrows to pierce, a sword to stab, and a fire to devour others. Yea, Solomon observes, that death and life are in the power of the tongue. It is a fire that kindles strife and contention in all societies, and turns them into confusion; and oft-times returns heavily on the head of those who carry it. The tongues from heaven were cloven, to be the more diffusive of good; but those fired from hell are forked to be the more impressive of mischief.

3. Consider the wickedness of it. It is a world of iniquity, Jam. 3:6. They have much ado that have an ill tongue to guide, a world of iniquity to guide. It is a broad stream from the fountain of the wickedness of the heart.

4. An unbridled tongue outs off all pretences to true religion, Jam. 1:26. For where the fear or love of God and our neighbour is in the

heart, it will be a bond on the tongue to keep it within the bounds of Christian charity.

5. We must give an account of our words at the day of judgment, Matth. 12:36, 37.

Lastly, An ill tongue will ruin the soul. Bridle your tongues; however unruly they be, they shall be silent in the grave. And, if repentance prevent it not, the day will come that they will be tormented in hell-flames, Luke 16.

I shall conclude with an advice or two.

1. Begin at the heart, if ye would order your tongues aright. Labour to get them cleansed by the sanctifying Spirit of Christ. Study love to God and your neighbour, which are the fulfilling of the law. Labour for meekness, and patience, and humility, which will be the best directors of the tongue.

2. Set yourselves, in the faith of promised assistance, to watch over your hearts and tongues. Unwatchfulness is dangerous in the case of such an unruly member as the tongue is. God has guarded it naturally. Do ye also watch it.

OF THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

EXOD. 20:17.—Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

THE scope of this command is to strike at the root and first risings of sin in the heart, in the desires going out of their right line of purity

and equity. It is a strict boundary set to the unbounded desires of the heart.

In it, there are, 1. The act. 2. The object The act, Thou shalt not covet, or lust, as the apostle terms it, Rom. 7:7; which implies an inordinateness of desire, a feverish motion of the soul towards the creature, irregular and disorderly; and so a dissatisfaction with one's present condition, as appears from Heb. 13:5. 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have.'

The object is held forth particularly for example's cause, thy neighbour's house, thy neighbour's wife, his servants, and goods. Thou shalt not only not take away thy neighbour's house from him by oppression, nor entice away his servants, nor steal his goods, nor entertain a fixed and deliberate desire to do him that injury as is forbidden in the eighth command; but the inordinate desire of having them shall not rise in, nor go through the heart, however lightly, if it were like a flying arrow, saying, O that his house, his servant, his ox and ass were mine! Thou shalt not only not defile his wife, nor deliberately desire to do it, as is forbidden in the seventh commandment; but thou shalt not say in thine heart, O that she were mine! though thou hast no mind, right or wrong, to make her so.

This object is held forth universally, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's: whereby it appears, that this command looks through all the other commandments of the second table, and so condemns all inordinate desire of any object whatsoever. And therefore the Papists dividing this command into two is absurd, and but a trick invented to atone for their confounding the first and second. While this command says, nor any thing, it says, Thou shalt not only not dishonour thy neighbour by insolent and contemptuous behaviour, but there shall not be a desire in thy heart, saying, O that his place and post were mine, as in the fifth command; nor, O that I had his health and strength, as in the sixth; nor his reputation and esteem, as in the ninth; though you have no deliberate design or desire to wrong him in these.

I do not wonder, if some are surprised at this, and say, Are these sins? for indeed this command goes deeper than the rest; and if it did not so, it would be superfluous; for you see it aims not at any new object, but holds by the objects of the former commands; therefore it must look to some more inward and less noticed motions of the heart, than the rest do. And therefore Paul, though he learned the law at the school of divinity under Gamaliel, a professor of it, yet, till he learned it over again at the school of the Spirit, holding it out in its spirituality and extent, he did not know these things to be sin, Rom. 7:7. It was this command brought home to his conscience, that let him see that lust to be sin which he saw not before.

And seeing this is a command of the second table, and ourselves are our nearest neighbour, the lust or inordinate desire of those things that are our own must be condemned here, as well as lusting after what is not ours.

So much for the negative part of this command, which in effect is this, Thou shalt not be in the least dissatisfied with thy own present condition in the world, nor have any inordinate motion in thy heart to that which is thy own or thy neighbour's.

The positive part is implied; and that is, Thou shalt be fully content with thy own lot, whatever it be, and arrest thy heart within the bounds that God has inclosed it in, bearing a charitable disposition to thy neighbour and what is his. For all covetousness implies a discontent with our own condition.

Quest. 'What is required in the tenth commandment?' Ans. 'The tenth commandment requireth full contentment with our own condition, with a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbour, and all that is his.'

Here I shall consider the duty of this command, as it respects,

I. Ourselves.

II. Our neighbour.

III. The root of sin.

I. I shall consider the duty of this command as it respects ourselves. If we consider, that this command forbidding coveting in the general, says, in effect, these two things, 1. Thou shalt not covet or lust after what thou hast; nor, 2. What thou wantest; the great duty of this command with respect to ourselves will appear to be twofold.

First, A thorough weanedness from and indifferency to all those things that we have, in which our desires may be too eager. There are some things whereof our desire cannot be too much, as of God, Christ, grace, victory over sin; and therefore we read of a holy lusting, Gal. 5:17. The renewed part not only desires, but eagerly and greedily gapes for perfect holiness and entire victory over sin. This is holy lusting, where there is no fear of excess, although indeed even that may degenerate, when our own ease, that is disturbed by sin, may be more in our view than the sinfulness of sin; and in this respect these lustings are mixed, and therefore sinful and humbling in the best; and they are so far contrary to this command, as they are lusting after ease, more than conformity to the holy will and nature of God.

There are other things to which our desires may be carried out too eagerly and inordinately; and the desire of them is lawful, but the coveting or lusting after them, which is the inordinate desire of them, is here forbidden. Thus we may sin, not only in the inordinate desire of sensual things, as meat, drink, &c. but in rational things, as honour, esteem, &c. The desire of these things is not sinful; but there is a lust of them which is so.

Now, in opposition to this, we must be thoroughly weaned from and holily indifferent to these things, not only when we want them, for that falls in with contentment, but when we have them. So should one be to his own house, wife, servants, and any thing that is his;

keeping our love to, desire after, and joy in them, within due bounds, as the Psalmist did, Psal. 131:2. 'Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.' We may take it up in these four things following.

1. The heart's sitting loose to them, so as the heart and they may fall asunder as things closely joined, yet not glued, when God shall be pleased to take them from us. For if they must needs be rent from us, it is an argument that our love to them was indeed a lust towards them. Therefore this disposition is called a hating of them, Luke 14:26; for things that we have, we can part with, without their tearing as it were a piece of our heart along with them. We can say little on this piercing command, but what will be accounted hard sayings, by all that have not a clear view of the transcendent purity of the law, which is carried to the height in this command, because to the root, the corruption of our nature. And that corruption we must still keep in view here, or we will do no good with it.

2. The heart's looking for no more from them than God has put in them. God has made created things as inns in the way to himself, where a person may be refreshed, but not as a resting-place, where the heart is to dwell. For the desire is inordinate when the man seeks his rest and satisfaction in these things instead of God, Psal. 4:6. The corrupt judgment magnifies earthly things, and looks on shadows as substances; and then the corrupt affections grasp them as such, and after a thousand disappointments lust after them still, Isa. 57:10.

3. The soul's standing on other ground, when these things stand entire about the man; drawing its support from God as the fountain, even when created streams are running full, 1 Sam. 2:1. Psal. 18:46. The world's good things must not be thy good things, Luke 16:25. Thou mayst love them as a friend, but not be wedded to them as a husband; use them as a staff, yet not as the staff of thy life, but a staff in thy hand; but by no means a pillar to build on them the weight of thy comfort and satisfaction.

4. The using of them passingly. We must not dip too far in the use of them. Lawful desire and delight, like Peter, walks softly over these waters, but lust shines in them; in the one there is a holy carelessness, in the other a greedy gripe. The apostle lively describes this weanedness, 1 Cor. 7:29, 30, 31. 'It remaineth that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.' The violent pulse of the soul in our high-bended hopes, perplexing racking fears, vehement love, swelling joy, and overmuch sorrow about these matters, is a sad symptom of the distemper of natural corruption that has seized, all Adam's sons. The greedy appetite that the heart is carried with these things, is a sad sign of an unweaned soul. A man may have a sinful lust to his meat, which yet is necessary to support his body; and a lust in the using of it, as those of the old world, Matth. 24:38. 1 Sam. 14:32. The dogs of Egypt, they say, lap the water of the river Nile running, for fear of the crocodiles; for not only in every berry of the vine, but in all created things there is a devil. See how the Lord tried the people, Judg. 7:6. 'And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men; but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.'

All these things the law requires in their perfection without the least mixture. Where is the clean man to cast a stone at the rest? It must be on a very transient glance of the heart that men say, The world is not their temptation, they care not for the world. For a view of the spirituality of the law would make us see that the world is fixed in our hearts, and only grace can loose it at the root, and only death can cast it over the hedge.

Secondly, A full contentment with our own condition. As for the sin in our condition, it is not from God, and there is no good in it; we are not called to be content with it, because it is not the condition which God set in us. But whatever else be in our condition, we are obliged

to be content with it, because so is the will of God that we should be in it. Every one is to look on his condition, as the paradise that God has set him down in; and though it be planted with thorns and briers, he must not look over the hedge; for thou shalt not covet. Though that which is wanting in thy condition cannot be numbered, and that which is crooked cannot be made straight, yet none of these things must render us uneasy in the least. There is required a full contentment, without a discontented glance of the eye. Much goes to the making up of it, all here required.

1. Hearty renunciation of our own will, saying with the pattern of contentment, Not my will, but thine be done. We must no more be chusers for ourselves of our own lot; but as little children standing at the table, not to carve for themselves, but to take the bit that is given them. 'He shall chuse our inheritance for us,' says the Psalmist, Psal. 47:4. Shall not Infinite Wisdom rule the world? This lies in three things.

(1.) We must not determine the kind or sort of our comforts, as we often do, like petted children, that will not have this the parent holds out, but that which they set their eye on. Like Adam, whom the fruit of the tree of life could not serve, but he would have the forbidden fruit. The desire of fruit was natural, therefore not evil; other fruit would have served that desire, if kept orderly; but the lusting desire could not want forbidden fruit. Rachael had a husband but she must have children too. Orpah must have a husband. Ruth wants both; but she determines nothing, but only she must have a God, and that she got, and both too.

(2.) We must not be positive as to the measure of our comforts; and there is no reason that beggars should be chusers. If the heart say, of our comforts, They are too little, and of afflictions, they are too great, it flies in the face of this command, and of God's sovereignty, setting up for independency, 1 Tim. 6:1. 'Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content,' though the food be coarse, though scanty, &c.

Nature is content with little, grace with less, and sets no measure; but the measure of lust can never be filled.

(3.) We must not be wilful in any thing, 1 Tim. 6:9. 'They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare,' &c. They that will have these things, and will not want them, will never be truly content till God's will be brought down to theirs; which will never be altogether; and if in a particular it come to be so, they will readily get their will with a vengeance, as the Israelites in the wilderness got. Psal. 78:29–31. 'So they did eat, and were well filled; for he gave them their own desire; they were not estranged from their Inst: but while the meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel.' Thus we must renounce our own will.

2. Absolute resignation to the will of the Lord, Matth. 16:24. 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' We must give over the war betwixt our will and the will of God, and our will must run as a captive after his triumphal chariot. His preceptive will is the rule of our duty; and his providential will, must with our consent, be the rule of our condition. Our will must follow his, as the shadow does the body, without gainsaying. If he will let us have a created comfort, we must be content to keep it; if not, we must be content to part with it. We must lie at the foot of Providence, as a ball before him that tosses it, to be thrown up and cast down as our God sees meet. This Providence will do with us whether we be willing or not; but if we be thus resigned, then our necessity is our obedience.

3. Entire submission to the will of God, 1 Sam. 3:18. 'It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.' As they resign themselves to his disposal, they must stand to his decision in the case. We must no more dispute the sovereignty with God, but allow the divine will and pleasure to carry it over the belly of our corrupt inclinations, and be disposed of by him, as the weaned child is by the nurse. If that which is crooked cannot be made straight, we must ply to it as it is; if our

lot be not brought up to our mind, we must bring down our mind to our lot, as Paul did, Phil. 4:11, 12. 'Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I. am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.' In this submission to the will of the Lord the soul of content lies. For God does not subject the man only, or cast him down, as he can do the most discontented person, making him walk with the yoke wreathed about his neck, whether he will or not. But the man voluntarily submits himself to God's disposal in the whole of his condition, whatever his wants be. Whatever be wanting in our condition, if we would be content,

1st, We must submit to them as just without complaining, as Cain did; saying with the prophet, Micah 7:9. 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.' We meet with no hardships in our lot, hut what we have procured to ourselves. And it is but just that we kiss the rod, and be silent under it. Let us complain of ourselves; why not? only leave our complaints there; but not set our mouths against the heavens; no, not in our hearts, for God knows the language of our hearts as well as our mouths. We most love his holiness and justice, in all the works thereof, though against ourselves. Nay more,

2dly, We must be quiet under them, without murmuring, as tolerable, Lam. 3:27–29. 'It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope.' So was Job at first, though his corruption got up at length, Job 1:22. 'In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.' How often do we cry out of insufferable affliction? yet we do bear up under it for all that, and would bear the better if we could be content and quiet under it. A meek and quiet spirit makes a light cross, for a proud unsubdued spirit lays a great overweight upon

every cross; as Rachel's unquiet spirit made the want of children wonderfully heavy, which others go very quietly and contentedly under. Nay more,

3dly, We must be easy without those things we want, as things we can want, without anxiety to get them, Phil. 4:12. Weaned hearts will be very easy without those things which others cannot digest the want of. What is the reason of so much uneasiness in our condition, but that we are wedded to this and the other thing; and being glad of the having of it we are exceeding uneasy at the parting with it, as Jonah was with his gourd? The contented man will be easy, and that not upon a sensible prospect, but on the faith of the promise, Phil. 4:6. 'Be careful for nothing: but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' But more than that,

4thly, We must be well satisfied and bear up comfortably under the want of them; standing upright when they are gone, as we did when we had them, or would do if we had them; even as the house stands when the prop that it did lean upon is taken away, Hab. 3:17, 18; 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olives shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' It is a sad evidence of the corruption of our nature, that woful lust after the creature that is bred and born with us, that our comfort waxeth and waneth, according to the waxing and waning of created enjoyments, and ebbs and flows as the breasts of the creature are full or empty. So, many lose all spirit and life in religion, when God pulls their worldly comforts from them; and even good people walk much discouraged and damped, not so much with the sense of God's anger, as the affliction in their lot. But what is yet more,

5thly, We must have a complacency in our condition, as what is good for us, otherwise we can have no full content. Observe the language

of a contented mind, not only just, but 'Good is the will of the Lord,' Isa. 39 ult. Content suffers not a person to go drooping under God's yoke, but makes him carry it evenly with a sort of complacency in it. Wise men have a pleasure in the working of physic, though it gripe them sore, if their physician thinks it good for their health, and they think so too. And grace sometimes finds a pleasure in pain, and a paradise within the thorny thicket of afflictions. See how the apostle gathered olive berries off the thorn-hedge of crosses, 2 Cor. 12:10. 'Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecution, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong.' Ay, there is a refined pleasure there, to see how God stops the entry for provision, that lusts may be starved; how he cuts off the by-channels, that the whole stream of love may run towards himself; how he pulls and holds off the man's burden, that he may run the more expeditely in the way to heaven. Nay, more than all that,

6thly, We must have a complacency in our condition, as that which is best for us for the time. Though he take health from thee, wealth, relations, &c. How is that possible? It is not easy to do it, but you must endeavour to see it; for that must be best that God judges best, and by the event it appears that God sees that condition best for thee for the time. Therefore we should meet it as David did Abigail, with 'Blessed be the Lord that Sent thee to meet me this day.' So did Job. chap. 1:21. 'Blessed be the name of the Lord.' Faith in the promise makes it practicable. All the works of God are the most perfect in their kind. But to come to the top of the ladder, the full sea-mark of content,

Lastly, We must rest in that condition, without the least squint look for a change of it, till God's time come. There must be no motion for it, but as heaven moves to carry our condition about with it. And so this hinders not prayer, nor the use of means, in dependence on God: but requires patience, faith, hope, and absolute resignation, 2 Sam. 15:25, 26. In this sense he that believeth doth not make haste; that is, the unbelieving haste which cannot wait God's time.

Quest. Is this full contentment possible? Ans. There is a twofold contentment: the one legal, which is full in the eye of the law; and this we can no more attain to than the perfect fulfilling of the law. It ceases not, however, to be our duty, and will be humbling to gracious souls so far as they come short of it. The other evangelical, which is full in the eye of the gospel, i. e. it is sincere: though it is not full in degrees, yet it is full in parts; it is in all the parts of contentment, though none of them are perfect; there is a submission to the whole will of God, though not perfect in degrees. And this is a necessary part of the new man, so that without it we are not sincere.

I shall now give reasons why we should be fully content with our own condition, whatever it be.

1. Because he that made the world guides it, and it is highly reasonable we allow it to be so. Let the discontented person answer that question which God proposes to sinners to silence their murmurings.' Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Matth. 20:15. The world is made by the Lord; and shall he not govern it, and dispose of it and all things therein as he sees best? Must the clay be allowed to say to the potter, 'Why hast thou made me thus? Should it be according to thy mind?' Job 34:33. Providence guides all, the Creator sits at the helm; and will not we be content with the course that is steered?

2. Thy condition is ordered by Infinite Wisdom. There is nothing that befalls us without the providence of God; and that is no blind chance, but a wise disposal of all according to the counsel of God's will. If the product of Infinite Wisdom content us not, we do but shew ourselves headstrong fools. He that numbers the hairs of our heads, Matt. 10:30 no doubt keeps an exact account of all the crosses in our lot, and of every ingredient in our cross, and gives them all out by weight and measure, as may most suit his infinitely-wise ends. And it is the height of folly to impeach the conduct of Infinite Wisdom.

3. All the good that is in our lot is undeserved, Lam. 3:22. The bitterest lot that any has in the world is mixed with mercy; and mercy is still predominant in our cup. It is true, discontented persons are like wasps and flies that look not near the sound parts, but swarm together on the sore place. They magnify their crosses, and multiply them too; but deal with their mercies as the unjust steward, instead of a hundred setting down fifty, and hardly so much. But let there be fair count and reckoning betwixt us and Providence, we shall find we are in God's debt, and every mercy we enjoy we have it freely and undeservedly from God's hand, Job 2:10.

4. All the evil that we meet with in our lot, we deserve it, we have ourselves to thank for it, Lam. 3:39. Shall men's hearts rise against God for what they have procured to themselves? Is it not a reasonable resolve, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him?' Mic. 7:9. A discontented spirit will always be found an unhumbled spirit, insensible of its ill deservings at God's hand.

Use. I exhort all to labour for a full contentment with their own condition. For motives to press this, consider,

1. The beauty of the rational world, under the conduct of Divine Providence, lies in every one's contentment with their own condition. One last shall as soon serve every foot, as one condition shall be agreeable to all. What confusion would be in the world, if there were not variety? If time were all day and no night, the moon and stars every one a sun, how would we be able to endure it. If the whole body were an eye, where were the useful and pleasant variety of members. And if all men were set under the same smiles of Providence, where were the beautiful variety and mixture in the web of providence that inwraps the world. Let us remember we are in the world as on a stage, where one must represent a king and another a beggar. It is God's part to chuse what part we shall act; and it is our business contentedly to act the part allotted for us.

2. Contentment makes a man happy and easy in every condition. It is the stone that turns all metals into gold, and makes one to sing and rejoice in every condition. A strong man will walk as cleverly under a heavy burden, as a weak man under a far lighter one, because of the proportion that is betwixt the strength and the burden in each. One man has his lot brought up to his mind, another has his mind brought down to his lot; is not the latter, then, as easy as the former is. All our uneasiness proceeds from our own minds; and could we manage them to a full contentment in every condition, no condition could make us miserable.

3. Time is short, and ere long we will be at our journey's end. The world's smiles will no more follow us, neither will the frowns of it reach us. Eternity is before us, and we have greater things to mind than our condition here. One traveller walks with a rough stick in his hand, and another with a cane: the matter is small which of them be thine, for at the journey's end both of them shall be laid aside.

Quest. How may we attain to full contentment with our own condition in a gospel-sense. There are two sorts of persons to whom we speak, some in a state of nature, others in a state of grace. One answer will not serve both; for though unrenewed sinners may have a shadow of contentment, it is impossible they can have true Christian contentment in that state: They may have a sort of contentment from a careless easy humour, yea, they may reason themselves into a sort of contentment as some Heathens did do. But true contentment with their condition they cannot have.

This is clear, if ye consider, that a restless heart can never be a contented heart; and seeing the heart of man is capable of enjoying an infinite good, and the whole creation is not capable to fill it, it follows, that the heart can never rest, nor be truly content, till it be so in God himself. Adam falling off from God, left us with a breast full of unsatisfied desires, because he left us seeking our satisfaction among the creatures, which are dry breasts, and cannot fill the heart; so till the soul return to God, it can have no true rest nor contentment. We

may say enough to stop the mouths of the discontented, whatever they be; but no considerations will avail to work true contentment in a person out of Christ, more than a hungry child will be reasoned into quietness while you give him no bread. Therefore the great and,

First, Direction for contentment is, that ye take God for your God in Christ, as he offers himself to you in the gospel. The great thing that ye want is a rest to your heart, and satisfaction to the unbounded desires thereof, to possess that which if you had your desires would be stayed, and ye would covet no more. I know, your false hearts and your foolish tongues have said, O, if I had such and such a created thing, I would be content, I would desire no more! But when ye got it, was it so indeed? was there not still a want? So it will be to the end. But here is the way to contentment: Jesus Christ, in whom dwells the fulness of the Godhead, offers himself to be yours. Accept of him by faith and then the sun is up with you, and ye will be content, though the candles of creature-comforts be put out. The wise merchant is content with the loss of all when he finds the one pearl, but not till then, Matth. 13:45, 46. Thus the foundation of full contentment is laid. And so I may go on to shew you further how to attain it. Therefore,

2. Believe that God is your God in Christ; apprehend him by faith as your portion; and contentment with your condition will follow of course, though your condition be very gloomy, Heb. 3:17. Full contentment with one's condition goes in equal pace with a man's clearness as to his interest in Christ. Let that be darkened, and he shall find himself grow more fretful and uneasy with crosses in the world. Let that be rising clearer and clearer, and the more clear it grows, his cross will grow the lighter, and easier to be borne.

If any should say, There is a particular thing in my condition that above all things I cannot be easy under; there is something I would have, and God sees it not meet to give it me: what shall I do to be content under it. I would say, be what it will, go to God, and make a solemn exchange of that thing. If he has kept that from you, he offers

you as good and better, that is to say, himself, instead of it. And do you renounce that thing, and give up with it, and take Christ instead of it; and having taken him so, believe that ye have him instead of it. Say, Lord, there is an empty room in this heart of mine, such a comfort would I have to fill it; but thou seest meet to refuse it; therefore I give up with it; thy will be done; but I take thyself instead thereof to fill up that room. And now I have made the exchange, and Christ is to me instead of that which I want. So shalt thou find thy heart satisfied. And if God see the comfort meet for thee, thou art then in the fairest way to get it too, Psal. 37:4.

This is the way of the gospel to full contentment, viz. the way of believing, by which all Christian duties are done, and gospel-graces are nourished in the heart. And to let you see the efficacy of these means for contentment, consider,

1. The heart of man is an empty hungry thing, that must be filled with something, and cannot abide want. Therefore it is, that when people miss their desired satisfaction in one thing, they go to make it up by another. Mordecai's not bowing to Haman discontented him, and he went to make it up by a revenge on all the Jews. But the misery is, there is a want in that thing too. It is like the putting of an empty spoon in the child's mouth, that may stop it for a moment; but as soon as it finds it is disappointed, and there is nothing in it, it falls a-crying again. Now, this directs you to that which infallibly makes up the want, and in which there is no want. And it is a sad matter, that those who have tried so many ways to make up their wants, will not try this too.

2. God is the Fountain of all perfection, and whatever is desirable in the creature is in an eminent way in God, Mat. 19:17. If the sun shine in at your windows, ye do not complain for want of candle-light. If all the vessels in your house were emptied of water, and the fountain were brought into it, ye are at no loss, but in better case than before. Even so, if all created streams should dry up, if ye have God for your God, ye may say indeed, that ye want these created things, but ye

have all the good that was in them, in another, to wit, in God. Ye want the vessels, but ye want not the water of comfort that was in them, for ye have it in God.

3. Having God for your God, ye have all in the promise, Rev. 21:7. He is unreasonably dissatisfied that has a good stock in bills and bonds from a sure hand, though he has little in his pocket, especially when all that is needful will be upon them answered on demand. He that has the lively faith of inheriting all things at length, will find it none of the most difficult tasks to be served with very little for the present.

4. Lastly, Having God for your God, the nature of your afflictions is altered. Your crosses are changed from curses into blessings; and however heavy they be, they run in the channel of the covenant to the common end of all covenant-blessings, your good, Rom. 8:28.

This way of believing in order to contentment is,

1. A sure way, which will infallibly produce it, as surely as the laying of a hungry babe to a full breast will stay it. How many ways do men try for this which all misgive? but this cannot misgive, seeing God in Christ is a full contenting object. And if our faith were perfect, our contentment would be so too. When faith is perfected in sight in heaven, the saints will be warm without clothes, full without meat, and rich without money, for God will be all to them.

2. A short way, by which we may come quickly to it. What a far way about do men go for contentment, while they compass the creation for it, and when all is done miss it? But here we may say, 'Be not afraid, only believe,' Mark 5:36.

3. The only way; there is no other way to come to it. Fulness in the world will not do it; for as the estate enlarges, the desire enlarges too, and knows no bounds till it comes to that which is infinite; and thither it cannot come till it comes to God. A kingdom could not content Ahab, discontent crept in under a crown on his head, 1 Kings 21:4. If ye do not take up your soul's rest in God as your God in

Christ, no considerations will prevail to content you. But if ye do, there are several considerations that may be of good use to you. As,

1. Consider, that the heaviest thing in thy lot comes out of a friend's hand. It is good news to Zion in the worst of times, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that sayeth unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!' Isa. 52:7. Whoever be the instruments of our affliction, and whose hand soever be heavy on us, we meet with nothing but what comes through our Lord's fingers, John 5:22. 'The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son. And will we not venture our outward condition in his hand, on which we venture ourselves for eternity? A tongue, far less a hand, cannot move against us but by him, 2 Sam. 16:10.

2. Consider how unmeet you are to carve for yourselves; 'and should it be according to thy mind?' Job 34:33. How weak are ye to discern your true interest? Could ye venture to pilot yourselves through the rocks and shelves in the world? No, ye dare not, if ye know yourselves. Why will ye not then resign yourselves to wise Providence? But, say ye, it is only in some things we would have it so or so. Ay, but Christ will be steersman for thee through the whole, or not at all. He will not share the government with thee; and there is no reason he should, for thou art weak, and seest not far off. There is many a pleasant green path in the world that leads into the lion's den, and many a rugged way that leads into a paradise: thou seest the hithermost end of the way, but not the far end; he sees it.

3. Have ye not already lived to see your hopes and fears both baffled by the conduct of wise Providence? As for the hopes ye have conceived of the choice of your own wilful will, have ye not been sometimes made to let the knife drop with shame, after ye have cut your fingers in carving for yourself; like Lot, not daring to stay in all the plain, though sometime before he built his own nest in the heart of it? And for your fears of the conduct of Providence, have ye not

seen how God has drawn you to your good against your will, and that it was good ye were crossed in such a matter, and that such a project of yours was baffled? Seeing, then, we are such bunglers at the carving of our lot, it is reasonable we quit the knife, and give it over, as Jacob did in Joseph's case.

4. Consider, that there is much about the ordering of thy lot, infinitely more than thou art master of thyself. Believe it,

(1.) That the seven eyes of Infinite wisdom are about it, Zech. 3:9; Now in the multitude of counsellors there is safety. There is no chance-work in the world, no random work in thy condition; it is not a work huddled up in a haste. The scheme of it was drawn from eternity, and lay before the Lord, without any need of alteration. Every thing in thy condition, however late brought forth, was from eternity in the womb of the wise decree, Zech. 6:1.

(2.) That there is a soft hand of grace and goodness about it, Rom. 8:28. A gracious Providence brings it forth out of the womb of the decree: why should we not then embrace it, and welcome it into the world? There is a stream of grace that goes through all the dispensations of providence to the Lord's people. Now, when Infinite Wisdom, tempered with grace and good-will, orders our lot, is it not reasonable, that we be fully content with it? Hence I infer,

1. Thy condition, whatever it is, is for God's honour; for it is ordered by him who does all for that end, and cannot fail of his design. Though thou dost not see how it is so, thou mayest believe that it is so, upon this ground. Providence runs much under ground, so as weak man cannot see how the means answer the end: but God sees it, and that is enough. This is a contenting consideration to a gracious soul, that will be pleased with that which may glorify God, Phil. 1:20.

2. Thy condition is good for thee, Rom. 8:28. That may be good that is not pleasant; it may bring profit that brings no pleasure. God loves

to work by contraries, to bring health to the soul out of sickness of the body, to enrich his people by poverty, to do them good by crossing of them, and blow them to their harbour by teeth-winds.

3. Nay, it is best for thee. If thou be a child of God, thy present lot in the world is the best thou couldst have for the present. Infinite Wisdom sees it is so; and grace and good-will makes it so. All God's works are perfect in their kind, Deut. 32:4. Will vain man come after God, and tell him how to mend his work? If it were not fittest for his own holy ends, it were not perfect. Nay, if thou be not in Christ, those things in thy lot which thou art discontented with, thy crosses and afflictions, are best for thee; for if any thing in thy lot bring thee to God, it will be this. Which brings me to a fifth thing.

5. Consider that those things in thy lot which thou art so ready to be discontented with, are truly necessary for thee, Lam. 3:33. If thou couldst want them, thou wouldst not get them; for God takes no pleasure merely in making his creatures miserable. If thy lot be afflicted, know that strong diseases must have strong remedies: blame not the physician for that, but the disease. The wilful child would live without the rod, but the parent sees it necessary to chastise him. If God withdraw any thing from thee, it is but to starve a lust that would feed on it; if he lay on thee what thou wouldst not, it is but to bear down a lust, that otherwise would carry thee headlong. Give Providence a fair hearing, it will answer for itself. Why should people then cast out with their mercies, and be angry with their blessings?

6. Consider that great things in one's lot have a great burden with them. A man will get a softer bed in a palace than in a cottage, but the mean man will readily sleep sounder in his cottage than the king in his palace. People look to the great things which others have beyond them, but they do not consider the burden going along with them. They who want the one want the other too, and therefore have reason to be content.

(1.) Where there is a great trust, there is a great reckoning. Luke 12:48. Thou seest others have much that thou wantest, grudge it not; they have the more to reckon for. God keeps an account of all his mercies bestowed on all men, and they that have most now have most to account for when the Lord shall seek an account of his servants. Look well to thyself, and be content. I fear it be found, that for as little as thou hast, thou hast more than thou canst guide well.

(2.) Great things in the world are great snares, and bring great dangers along with them, Mark 10:23. They that walk low make not such a figure as those that walk on high; but the latter are most apt to fall. How fond are we of the world even when it frowns on us? what would become of us if it did nothing but smile? It is hard to carry a full cup even. Affliction is often seasonable ballast to a light heart, that prosperity would give too much sail to, till it should be sunk.

7. Consider, if thou be a child of God, that which thou hast, thou hast on free cost, Rom. 8:32. And therefore, though it be little, it is better to thee than the abundance of many others, which will bring a dear reckoning at length. The children of the family may fare more coarsely than strangers; but there is a great difference; the strangers have a reckoning for it when they go away; but the children have nothing to pay.

(1.) Remember thou forfeited all in Adam; it is a mercy that thou hast any thing at all. I know nothing but sin and death that we can lay claim to as our own property, Lam. 3:39. He that deserves hell has no reason to complain, while he is out of it.

(2.) Any thing which thou hast a covenant right to now, is through Christ; it is the purchase of his blood. So that makes it precious, as being the price of blood; and that should make us content with it, seeing we have it freely through him.

8. Consider the vanity of all things below the sun, Eccl. 1:2. A just estimation of worldly things would make us content with very little.

But a blind judgment first sets an exorbitant price on earthly things, and raises the value of them; and then people think never to get enough of them. But low thoughts of them would clip the wings of our affections to them, and little of them would content us, Prov. 23:5. Riches make themselves wings, and fly away. There is a wing of chance, casualties, and losses: and though by thy wisdom thou could clip all these wings, yet there is a wing of death and mortality that will carry them away.

9. Consider the preciousness and excellency of heavenly things, Col. 3:2. More heavenly-mindedness would make us less anxious about these things. If we be in hazard of losing these, it is madness to be taken up about trifles, and concerned with earthly losses. Will he whose life is in hazard go up and down making moan for a sore finger? And if they be secured, it is horrid ingratitude to be discontent with our lot here. Would a man that has a ship loaded with goods coming ashore, vex himself for losing a pin out of his sleeve, or a penny out of his pocket? Heaven will make up all our losses; and hell will make men forget their greatest crosses in the world.

Lastly, Consider much of death and eternity. For as little as any of us have, we have perhaps as much as will serve our turn here. Our time is uncertain. It is folly to vex ourselves, though we have not all conveniences that we would desire in a house that we have no tack of, but may remove from it to-morrow.

I have insisted largely on this point, because it is so very necessary. Labour for a full contentment with your condition. This is the way to make a virtue of a necessity; for our discontent and uneasiness will not add a cubit to the stature of our lot. And that which God will make crooked in it, we will not get made straight, however uneasy we may be about it.

II. We are to consider the duty of this command, as it respects our neighbour. And that is a right and charitable or loving frame of spirit

towards himself and all that is his. We may take up this in five things, which are here required.

1. Love to our neighbour's person, as to ourselves, Rom. 13:9. For seeing this command forbids us to wrong him so much as in thought, it plainly binds love to him upon us; not in word only, nor in deed only, by doing him good, but in heart, that our bowels move towards him, for the sake of God. For whatever be unholy in him, yet he is one of God's creatures, of the same nature with ourselves, and capable of enjoying the same God with us.

2. An upright respect to what is his, for his sake. As we are to love himself for God's sake, so what is his for his sake, Deut. 22:1. A careless disposition and unconcernedness about what is our neighbour's, can never be a right frame to what is his. So it is an argument of the world's corruption, that all men seek their own things, and are so little concerned for the things of others. That is not charitable walking, Phil. 2:4.

3. An hearty desire of his welfare and prosperity in all things, as of our own, his honour, life, chastity, wealth, good name, and whatever is his. This we owe to our very enemies, so far as it may be consistent with the honour of God, and their own spiritual good, which is the main thing we are to desire for all. I add this, because sometimes the loss of these may be more to the honour of God, and our neighbour's advantage, than the having of them, to wit, when they are abused to sin, Rom. 12:20. Matth. 5:44.

4. A real complacency in his welfare and the welfare of what is his, Rom. 12:15. If our hearts rejoice not in our neighbour's welfare, we covet what he has, and secretly in our hearts devour it. But as we are to be well content with our own condition, so we are to be well content with our neighbour's welfare.

5. Lastly, A cordial sympathy with him in any evil that befalls him, Rom. 12:20. For we are members one of another; and as every

member shares in the grief of any one, so should we in one another's afflictions. A hard heart unconcerned with the afflictions of others, especially where people talk to the grief of those whom God has wounded, is a sign of a wretched temper and uncharitable frame of spirit, Psal. 69:26. and 35:13, 14, 15.

III. We must consider this command as it respects the root of sin. And so it requires original righteousness, a holy frame of the soul, whereby it is bent to all good, and averse to all evil; that holy frame of spirit that was in the first Adam when he was created, and all along in the second Adam. And thus this command carries the matter of holiness to the utmost point.

That this is here required, will appear, if ye consider that this command forbids the very first risings of original corruption, whose very nature it is to be still coveting; and therefore original corruption itself is forbidden, and consequently original righteousness required.

Not only good actions are required by the holy law, but a holy temper of the spirit, consisting in the light of the mind taking up duty, a bent of the will inclining ever to good, and averse to every evil, and the orderliness of the affections, keeping precisely within the holy boundaries set to them by the law, not to look over the hedge in the least point.

This is certainly required somewhere in the law; for men are condemned for the want of it; and in none of the commands is it required, if it be not here. And thus ye may see the utter impossibility of keeping perfectly these commands; for whatever men pretend as to the rest, who of Adam's children do not stick here as soon as they are born?

This command reaches us as soon as we are born; nay as soon as we are living souls in the womb, requiring of us what we have not to produce, and that is an holy nature. But, alas! we are evil before we

can do evil; and we want that holy nature naturally, and therefore have at length such unholy lives.

If it be inquired, How this command in this point is answered sincerely? Ans. It is by our being renewed in the spirit of our minds, our partaking of the new nature in regeneration, where old things being done away, and all things becoming new, we are made new creatures. This is that new nature which is the image of God repaired, with a perfection of parts, to be crowned in heaven with a perfection of degrees.

And it is worthy of our observation, that Jesus Christ being to fulfil all righteousness, was born holy, and so fulfilled this command for us. In him the law has its due, he being a man, who from his birth had a holy pure nature, a holy frame of spirit, without the least irregularity or disorder.

To conclude, ye may see the command is pure, just, and holy, however impure we be; and requires of us the utmost parity of heart, life and nature.

I now proceed to consider the sins forbidden.

Quest. 'What is forbidden in the tenth commandment?'

Ans. 'The tenth commandment forbiddeth all discontentment with our own estate, envying or grieving at the good of our neighbour, and all inordinate motions and affections to any thing that is his.'

This command is a curb and bridle to the distempered heart of man, which of all parts of man is the hardest to be commanded and kept within bounds. Men may be of a courteous obliging behaviour, keep in their hands from killing, or what tendeth thereunto, their bodies from uncleanness, their hands from stealing, and their tongues from lying; while, in the mean time, the heart in all these respects may be going within the breast like a troubled sea, unto which this command by divine authority saith, Peace, and be still.

The heart distempered by original sins runs out in the irascible faculty in tormenting passions, bearing an aversion of the heart to what the Lord in his wisdom lays before men. This great stream of the corruption of our nature divides itself into two branches; one running against our own condition, namely, a torrent of discontent; the other against our neighbour, namely, envying and grudging at his good. In the concupiscible faculty, in lusting affections and inordinate motions towards something which God has put out of our way, at least with-held from our closest embraces. This also divides itself into two branches; one running towards what is our own, namely, a sinful eagerness, lost, or inordinate motion of the heart to what we possess; the other running towards what is our neighbour's, an inordinate affection to what is his. Thus the corrupt heart runs in a direct opposition to the will of God, refusing what he would have us to accept, and embracing closely what he would have us to stand at a distance from. The corrupt fountain with its several streams is all here forbidden. We shall speak to them all as laid before us, tracing the streams to the fountain-head.

FIRST, the streams in which the distemper of the heart runs are here forbidden expressly, because these are most exposed to our view. Let us view,

FIRST, The tormenting passions, in which the corruption of nature vents itself; for sin is in its own nature misery. We need but go in the paths of sin to make us miserable, and in the high road of duty to make us happy. We shall consider the tormenting passion,

First, Of discontent with our own estate or condition. This is plainly here forbidden; for discontentment is presupposed to coveting; and there could be no coveting of what we want without discontentment with what we have. The lusty gapings of the heart say, there is an uneasiness within. It is only the plague of discontentment that makes the heart cry, Give, give.

I. I will shew the evil of discontentment, and paint out this Sin in its black colours. It is the hue of hell all over.

1. Discontent is, in the nature of it, a compound of the blackest ingredients, the scum of the corrupt heart boiling up, and mixed to make up the hellish composition.

1st, Unsubjection to and rebellion against the will of God, Hos. 4:16. 'Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer;' backsliding or refractory, that will not admit the yoke farther than it is forced on. The discontented heart cannot submit, but sets its foot as par against the divine dispensation. Though God guides and governs the world, they are the malcontents, that are not pleased with the government, but mutiny against it. What pleases God, pleases not them; what is right in God's eyes, is evil in theirs. And nothing will please them, but to have the reins of government out of God's hands into their own; though, if their passion did not blind their judgment, they might see how they would quickly fire the little world of their own and other's condition, if they had the reins in their own hand.

2dly, Sorrow of heart under the divine dispensation towards them. It is not according to their mind, and so their heart sinks in sorrow, 1 Kings 21:4. God crosses their will, and they pierce their own hearts with many sorrows; as if a man, because he cannot stop the course of the sun in the firmament, would wrap up himself in darkness.

And this is a killing sorrow, a sword thrust into a man's heart by his own hands, 2 Cor. 7:10. It melts a man's heart within him; like a vulture, preys upon his natural spirits, tending to shorten his days. It makes him dumpish and heavy like Ahab, and is a heavy load above the burden of affliction. That is the black smoke of discontentment, which yet often breaks out into a fiery flame, as in the same case of Ahab, where Naboth fell a sacrifice to it.

3dly, Anger and wrath against their lot, Jude 16. Complainers. The word signifies such as are angry at their lot, and in the distributions

Providence makes of the world, still complain that the least or worst part of it falls to their share. Thus the discontented do in their hearts bark at the mountains of brass, Zech. 6:1; as dogs do at the moon, and with the same success. They are angry with God's dispensations, and their hearts rise against it, and snarl at it.

And this is a fretting anger, whereby men disquiet and vex themselves in vain, like men dashing their heads against the wall; the wall stands unmoved, but their heads are wounded. Like a wild bull in a net, the more he stirs, the faster is he held; so that still they return with the loss. Thus discontent is in the heart like a serpent gnawing the bowels, and makes a man as a moth to himself, consuming him, or a lion tearing himself, Job 18:4.

Lastly, There is a spice of heart-blasphemy in it; for it strikes very directly against God the Governor of the world, and accuses his administration; and for an evidence of this, it sometimes breaks out in words, Mal. 3:13, 14, 15; 'Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord: yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy: yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.' Discontent accuses him,

(1.) Of folly, as if he were not wise enough to govern the world. The peevish discontented person, in his false light, sees many flaws in the conduct of Providence, and pretends to tell God how he may correct his work, and how it would be better. If the work of Providence be wisely done, why are we discontent with it? or would we be discontent with it, if we did not think we saw how it should be otherwise, and how it might be mended?

(2.) Of injustice, as if he did us wrong. The judge of all the earth cannot but do right. He cannot be bribed nor biassed; yet the discontented heart rises against him, and blasphemes him as an

respector of persons. It looks on his distributive justice (if we may so call it, for indeed all is his own, not ours) with an evil eye, and accuses him of partiality in not giving them as good as others, complaining of their share. On his corrective justice, if they did not deserve what he lays on them. For if we do deserve the evil in our lot, there is no wrong done us; and why do we then complain? And to fill up the measure, it accuseth him,

(3.) Of cruelty. Job, in a fit of discontent, speaks it out, chap. 30:21; 'Thou art become cruel to me.' Thus goodness itself is blasphemed by the discontented, who behave as if they were under the hands of a merciless tyrant, who would sport himself with one's misery. Discontent fills the heart with black and hard thoughts of God, and represents him as a rigid master and cruel lord; otherwise people would lay their hand on their mouth, and be content.

Some will say, that their discontent is with themselves, not with God, having brought their cross on with their own hands. Ans. If it be the effect of your sin, ye may mourn for your sin, but ye should the rather be content with your lot. And as for mismanagements, there is a providence that reaches them, and so God is our party still: but nothing is more ordinary than that, Prov. 19:3; 'The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord.'

Others say, that it is with the instruments of their trouble they are discontented. Ans. But consider that they are but instruments in God's hand, in the hand of his providence, and therefore ye should not be discontent. Say as David did to the sons of Zeruiah, 'What have I to do with you? so let him curse because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?' 2 Sam. 16:10. No creature can be more to us than God makes it to be: if then God shall squeeze any creature dry of comfort to us, and we thereupon prove discontented, whatever we pretend, our hearts fret against the Lord, Exod. 16:2; compare ver. 7.

Thus ye see the picture of discontentment; and does it not look very black? There are ounces and pounds of rebellion against the will of God, killing sorrow and fretting anger, and hideous heart-blasphemy in it, while there is not one grain of religion or reason that goes into this hellish composition. If one should take it for a description of hell, he would not be far out; for the truth is, discontent is a hell in the bosom, and a lively emblem of the pit of darkness.

2. If ye view discontentment in the rise of it, ye will see further into the evil of it. It takes its rise from,

1st, A blinded judgment which puts darkness for light, and light for darkness, and cannot see into the wisdom of the conduct of Providence, that does all things well. When our blind minds begin to refine on the management of holy Providence, they are apt to produce discontent, which in respect of Providence is always unreasonable. See how good Jacob bewrays his folly and ignorance of the methods of providence, Gen. 42:36; 'Ye have bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.' Compare with this the promise, Rom. 8:28; 'All these things shall work together for good to them that love the Lord, to those who are called according to his purpose;' and also compare the event; and ye will see that all these things were for the benefit of the good Patriarch, and that of his numerous family.

Yea, oft-times does it so readily rise out of darkness, that it springs up from mere suspicion, misapprehension, and mistake, so that a little cloud of that nature over the mind will in the end cover the mind with the blackness of discontent: as in the case of Ahab, 1 Kings 21:4; compare ver. 6. And indeed there is never a ground of discontent, but the blind mind does magnify it, and lays to it such heaps of rubbish, as the heart is not able to stand under it, as in the case of Rachel, Gen. 30:1; 'When Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.' Thus are our own dark minds the anvil on

which our miseries are beat out into greater breadth and length than they are of, as they come out of the hand of God, to the end they may cover our hearts with discontent. Happy is the man that can take up his cross as God lays it down, without adding more to it.

2dly, A proud heart. Haman's pride discontented him for want of bows and cringes from Mordecai, which would never have troubled a humble man. A proud heart is a wide heart, Prov. 28:25. Heb. It is not little that will fill it; it is long ere it will say, it is enough: and so it natively produces discontent. The devil is the proudest creature, and withal the most discontented; for pride and discontent lodge always under one roof. And could we get blood let of the heart-vein of pride, we would see the swelling ulcer of discontent fall apace.

3. An unmortified affection to the creature, 1 Tim. 6:9, 10; Jonah had a gourd, and he was exceedingly glad of it, Jonah 4:6; it is taken away, and then he was exceedingly discontented, ver. 9. The heart takes such a hold of such and such a created comfort, that it becomes like a live limb of a man's body; so when it is rent away, what wonder one cry out, as if men were cutting a limb off him? No body cries out for the losing of a tree leg, because it has no communication with the members of the man's body, it is a dead thing. So, were our affection to the creature deadened to it, as it should be, discontent could have no access.

4. A spirit of unbelief. Want of faith marred the acceptance of Cain's offering, Heb. 11:4; and opened the sluice of discontent on him too, Gen. 4:5; 'Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.' Discontent feeds on wants, faith brings in the supply of wants, and can feed on it, while it is yet in the promise. Where unbelief is, then no wonder discontent prevail. A lively faith would kill discontent; whereas unbelief nourishes and cherishes it; for it puts an effectual bar in the way of the rest of the heart, which it can never attain but in God.

5. View it in the effect, and it will appear very black. The tree is known by its fruits.

1st, It mars communion with and access to God. Muddy and troubled water receives not the image of the sun, as a clear and standing water will do. So a discontented heart is unfit for communion with a holy God, 1 Tim. 2:8; 'Can two walk together except they be agreed?' If one would have communion with God, his heart must not be boiling with anger against his brother, Matth. 5:23, 24. How then can he have it, when he is angry with his God, as in discontent?

2dly, It quite unfits a man for holy duties, so that he cannot perform them rightly or acceptably, for speaking to God in prayer, or his speaking to them by his word. 1. It deadens one's heart within him as in Nabal's case, 1 Sam. 25:37 whose 'heart died within him, and he became as a stone.' 2. It takes away the relish of spiritual things, vitiates the taste, and turns them sapless to people, as it did to the Israelites in Egypt, Exod. 6:7–9:3. It carries the heart off the duty, to pore on the ground of discontent, and makes them drive heavily in God's worship, and serve him drooping and heartless, as it did the Jews in Malachi's time, Mal. 2:13, 14. Their unkindness to their wives made them discontented and fretful, so that when they came to the temple, they were quite out of humour.

3dly, Nay, it unfits people for the work of their ordinary calling. It is not only an enemy to grace, but to gifts too, and common prudence. The black fumes ascending from the discontented heart overcloud the judgment in ordinary matters, that the one hand knows not what the other is doing, as in Nabal's case, who should have gone and made his peace with David. So that it is a plague to people, not only as Christians, but as men.

4thly, It mars the comfort of society, and makes people uneasy to those that are about them. When Elkanah went up to Shiloh with his family to rejoice before the Lord, fretting Hannah is out of tune, and mars the harmony, 1 Sam. 1:7, 8. Peninnah provokes Hannah, Hannah is angry with her, and Elkanah with both. So it is the pest of society, and makes an evil world ten times worse. It makes people a burden to others, because it gives them a cloudy day while it lasts.

5thly, It is a torment to one's self, and makes a man his own tormentor, 1 Kings 21:4. It wraps him up in darkness, feeds him with bitterness, and gives him gall and wormwood to drink, Prov. 15:16 for his ordinary. It robs him of the best worldly thing he can possess, i. e. his peace and tranquillity of mind; and makes his mind within him as the troubled sea that cannot rest. So the discontented person is on a continual rack, and he himself is executioner. All sins are displeasing to God, yet in many there is some pleasure to men, both the actors and others; but corrupt nature cannot strain any pleasure out of this in one's self, nor in others either, unless, like the devil, they have a pleasure in seeing others miserable.

6thly, It is not only tormenting to one's mind, but is ruinous to the body, Prov. 17:22. 'A broken spirit drieth the bones.' It is a degree of self-murder. It wastes the natural spirits, and has a native tendency to cut short one's days. The soul and body are so knit, that they mutually affect one another; and the mind disordered by fretting passions, will fret the body, and consume it like a moth.

7thly, It sucks the sap out of all one's enjoyments. As a few drops of gall will imbitter a cup of wine, and a few drops of ink will blacken a cup of the clearest liquor; so discontent upon one ground will imbitter and blacken all other enjoyments. See it in Haman, Esth. 5:11–13. 'And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. Haman said, moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet which she had prepared, but myself; and to-morrow am I invited unto her also with the king. Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.' See it also in Ahab, 1 Kings 21:4. 'And Ahab came into his house, heavy and displeased, because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers: and he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.' As contentment turns all metals into gold, so discontentment

turns them into iron. What taste is there in the white of an egg without salt? There is as much as in any enjoyment under the sun without contentment. If we have not that for seasoning to our comforts, they are tasteless and sapless as ashes. And therefore let a man have what he will he enjoys no more than what he has contentment in.

8thly, Hence it always makes one unthankful. Let Providence set the discontented man in a paradise, the fruit of that one tree which is forbidden him, and which he is so uneasy about, will so imbitter him, that he will not give God thanks for all the variety of other delights which the garden is furnished with. For all these avail him nothing while that is kept out of his reach. It will make him pore so on his cross, that he will not look over his shoulder to all his comforts. Ingratitude is a sin of a black die: how much more must that be so which is the cause of it?

Lastly, It is a fruitful womb of other sins, it brings forth a great brood of other lusts. When once it entered into Adam's heart, it made him at one stroke break through all the ten commandments. It were an endless labour to recount the viporous brood that comes forth of this cockatrice-egg, that fry of enormous lusts that are bred by it. But for a swatch of this, I will instance in three of the grossest sins that man can readily fall into, which are the natural product of discontentment.

(1.) Murder, the grossest sin of the second table, a sin which a peculiar vengeance pursues, and which a natural conscience so startles at, that it is a continual lash to the murderer. This is the product of discontent; for when once the heart smoking with discontent, breaks out into a flame, it breathes out blood and slaughter. So Ahab's discontent was the cause of the murder of Naboth, with all the mocking of God, the perjury and robbery that attended it, 1 Kings 21. Nay, not content with the murder of a single person, it gaped in Haman to devour a righteous nation for one man's cause, Esth. 3:6. Nay, the worst sort of murder proceeds from

it; the murder of nearest relations, as in the case of Cain's murdering Abel, Gen. 4:5, 8. And, which is worst of all, self-murder is what always proceeds from it, as in the case of Ahithophel, 2 Sam. 17:23. People grow discontented with their lot, their proud hearts are not able to bear it; so they turn desperate, seeing they cannot help it, and make away with themselves.

(2.) Dealing with the devil. The discontented being angry with God, they are in a fair way to be a prey to Satan. Thus Saul, in a fit of discontent, went to the witch at Endor, 1 Sam. 28. The discontented heart is a drumly heart, and it is in such waters that Satan loves to fish. And here is his hook wherewith he catches them; he proffers to do that for them, or give that to them, which God will not. And they being intent upon it, so that they cannot be easy without it, are easily ensnared. Whereof the world has afforded many miserable instances.

(3.) Blasphemy against God, the grossest sin of the first table, for of that kind is the unpardonable sin. Discontent is in its own nature a practical blasphemy, and therefore when it comes to a height, it breaks out in open blasphemy, as in that abominable mouth, 2 Kings 6 ult. 'This evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?' For being angry with God, people begin to quarrel with him, and murmur against him; and if they do not hold in time, they are in a fair way to blaspheme. Therefore it is marked concerning Job, how by his sitting down contented under all his losses the devil missed the mark he aimed at in them, Job 1 ult. compare ver. 11. It is marked concerning Aaron, that he held his peace, Lev. 10:3 for it is hard to speak, and speak right, under great pressures. These effects may convince us of the exceeding evil of this root of bitterness.

Lastly, View it in the qualities that agree to it, which are not in many other sins. I will name the following.

1st, It is the noted rebel in the kingdom of providence. God who has created the world, vindicates the government of it to himself alone. But the discontented go about to wrest the reins of government out

of his hand. It wages war with the Governor of the world, and strives with him, as if the clay should strive with the potter, and say, 'Why hast thou made me thus?'

2. It is a peculiar despiser of the kingdom of grace. There is a particular malignity in it against the grace of the gospel. For it throws contempt on God, heaven, and all the purchase of Christ, which is offered in the gospel to fill up the room of what the discontented wants, Exod. 6:7, 9. It is true, other lusts do so too, as covetousness, sensuality, and profaneness. But here lies the difference; these lusts have a bait of profit or pleasure with them, and have something to put in the room of spiritual things; discontent has no bait with it, nor any thing to put in the room of them. If one should reject your converse, who has another less worthy to converse with, it is a slight: but if one that has none, if they take not you, do reject you, that is a greater contempt by far. So the discontented will rather pine away without any comfort, than take it from the gospel. Again, in these lusts there is a folly and simplicity; but in discontent there is a kind of gravity and devilish seriousness. To be contemned by a simple one or a roving fool, is not easy; but it is worse by far to be contemned in a way of gravity and deliberation. This is most cutting.

Lastly, It follows men to, and will continue with them, in the kingdom of darkness for ever. There are some lusts which men have no use for beyond the line of time; the covetous will despise their gold, money and wealth in hell, the unclean person his filthy companions, &c. But when the discontented die without repentance, their works will follow them to the pit. In hell they will be discontented for ever without the least intermission; they will never give one smile more, but an eternal cloud of darkness will be on their countenance, and they will fret, murmur, and rage against God and themselves and blaspheme for evermore.

Let us see the evil of this, then, and guard against it.

Secondly, I will offer some remedies against it, and advices in the ease.

1. Practise the directions for contentment; particularly take God for your God in Christ, and labour to believe he is so. Take him in the room of whatever ye want, or lies on you, which discontents you. Without this all else will be in vain. The greatest hole in your heart, the enjoyment of God is able to make up. And God often makes such in the hearts of men and women, that there may be room for himself, who otherwise is not missed, Zeph. 3:17. 'The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.'

2. Labour to be humble. Humility lets us see our true worth that it is nothing, and so fences the heart against discontent, Gen. 32:10. It makes one wonder he has any thing at all left him, and so lets him into the mystery of that text, 1 Thess. 5:18. 'In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.' He that is convinced that he deserves death, will not be discontent with banishment. And he that believes that he deserves to lose the presence of God for ever, will lay his hand on his mouth under temporal losses.

3. Believe that there is nothing in the world in which either your happiness or misery is bound up. I know there are things of which we wont to speak so; but the world's happiness or misery is but a shadow of these things. That is happiness where a man wants no more than he can desire, and that is only in the enjoyment of God. And that is misery where one has nothing desirable left him, and none see that till they be in hell.

4. Do not pore upon your crosses, for that does but breed and feed discontent, Psal. 39:3. It is observable, that Jacob would not call his son Benoni, lest that should at every naming of the child ruffle his wound. But you may dwell upon your affliction as from the hand of God, to consider wherefore the Lord has contended, that so you may

get the good of it. But turn your eyes on your mercies which you enjoy and be thankful.

5. Be much exercised in religious duties. Go often to your knees, and pour out your hearts before the Lord, and tell him all your wants. This gave Hannah a sweet case, 1 Sam. 1:18. Go often to your Bibles, and hear the good news there from the far country, that is above the clouds, where there is neither cloud nor rain, Psal. 73:16, 17 and 119:92. There are springs of consolation there, which a person never tastes of, till he be brought into the condition for which they were placed there.

6. Be always exercised in some honest business. Idleness is dangerous many ways, particularly in the point of discontent. It is a nurse and fosterer of it. It is the standing pool that gathers mud; and in those that are idle Satan will be busy, and will not miss the opportunity.

7. Curb it as soon as it begins to set out its head, nip it in the bud, for it is a fire that gathers force by continuing and spreading. The water which at the head might be easily passed, comes afterwards to be so big as may easily drown. Discontent is a striving with God, and so is like the letting out of waters, which however small at the beginning, grows to a monstrous bigness, if not timely remedied.

Lastly, Live by faith; that is the best preservative against discontent. Faith stays the soul in all events on the promises; gives a favourable view of all crosses and afflictions, as tending to the good of the party; lays hold upon things unseen as the great portion; and so lessens the care about things of the world; and, in a word, finds all it wants in God. Thus much of discontent.

II. The branch that runs against our neighbour's condition is envying and grudging. The object of this sin is the good of our neighbour; and the better the object is, the worse is the sin. It runs through the objects of all the other commands of the second table; for the heart is

apt to envy our neighbour's honour, life, &c. It is near of kin to discontent which always accompanies it, as we may see in the case of Ahab, 1 Kings 21:4 for it goes always on a comparison of our neighbour's condition with one's own, the grudge being that they have more or as much as we.

I shall shew the evil of it, and the remedies thereof.

First, I shall shew the evil of it briefly.

1. View it in the ingredients thereof, whereof it is made up.

1st, Sorrow and grief for the good of our neighbour, 1 Cor. 13:4. (So opposite is it to charity); for envy makes the heart like the moon that shines full and clear in the night, as long as itself is the topping light, but grows pale and wan as soon as the sun riseth, John 3:26. The prosperity and welfare of others is a weight on the envious heart, a thorn in the evil eye, and a prick in that weak side, Gen. 31:1.

2dly, Fretting anger at their good, Psal. 37:1. What makes others easy, makes the envious uneasy; and the more fresh and green others are by the providence of God, the more withered and fretted are they, Num. 11:28, 29. So it was with Joseph's brethren. The sun shining on others burns them up; and the more it warms their neighbour, the more it scorches them, and makes the black fume of envy and grudge to ascend.

2. View it in the springs and rise thereof.

1st, Covetousness of what is their neighbour's. Had not Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard he had not grudged him the possession of it. The envious would draw all to themselves; and what they are sorry others should keep, they themselves would fain possess. A heart knit to the world, and carnal self-interest cannot miss to be envious.

2dly, Discontent. The envious are always discontented that they have not more than others, or that they want what others do enjoy,

Discontent makes an empty room with them, and envy frets that it is not filled up with what belongs to their neighbour.

3dly, Pride and selfishness, Gal. 5 ult. Pride so exalts one's self, and depresses others, that nothing is too much for the proud man, and nothing too little for his neighbour. Selfishness cares only for what is one's own, and has no regard to the interest of our neighbour; quite contrary to the spirit of the gospel, that teaches, that every man should not look on his own things, but also on the things of others, Phil. 2:4. Hence the man cannot endure to see others like him, far less above him.

3. View it in the effects thereof. It has almost the same as those of discontent, which may be well applied thereto. I will only say, that envy is a sword, and wounds three at once.

1st, It strikes against God, being highly offensive and dishonourable to him. It quarrels his government of the world, and accuses him of folly, partiality, and injustice, Matth. 20:15. It cannot rest in the disposals of holy providence, but is ever picking quarrels with its management. Some have too much, others too little, the world is ill dealt; though had they the dealing of it, where there is one complaint now, there would be ten in that case, for they would heap it up to themselves, come of others what would.

2dly, It strikes against our neighbour. It is a bitter disposition of spirit, wishing his ill-fare, and grudging his good; and not only binds up men's hands from doing him good, but natively tends to loose them to his hurt. It will be at him one way or other in word or deed, and there is no escaping the evil of it, Prov. 27:4. 'Who is able to stand before envy?' Oft-times it drives on men to the greatest extravagancies, as it did Joseph's brethren to murder him; which being stopt, they sold him for a slave, Gen. 37:11, &c.

3. It strikes, at one's self, Job 5:2. 'Envy slayeth the silly man.' Though it be so weak as to do no execution on others, yet be sure it

never misses a man's self; and it wounds one's self the deeper, that it cannot do much hurt to the party envied. It frets the mind, and keeps it always uneasy as upon tenter-hooks; nay, it ruins the body, and silently murders it, Prov. 14:30. 'Envy is the rottenness of the bones,' making a man to pine away, because others thrive.

Secondly, I shall give the remedies of this sin.

1. Taking and cleaving to God himself as our portion, Matth. 6:21. God is a full portion, and in him there is enough for all; and if our souls rest in him, they will easily bear others having other things that we want. But the world can never satisfy; and therefore when people look for their portion in it, it is no wonder they be always complaining, and think others have more and better than they, because if they had it all alone, they would not have enough.

2. Loving God for his own sake, and our neighbour for his sake. Did we thus love, we would rejoice in God's honour, and our neighbour's welfare. This guarded Moses and John against envy, and made them joy in what others grieved at and grudged. An onvious spirit is a narrow spirit, that is never concerned for the one nor the other, but for sweet self, to which all must be sacrificed by them.

3. Humility, which would make us low in our own eyes, and make others high. He that is in his own eyes nothing, will not grudge though his part be less than others; the chief of sinners will never think the highest seat among the favourites of providence belongs to him. And whoso have a due regard for others, will not grudge that it is well with them.

I come next to consider how the corruption of nature runs in concupiscence, lust, or inordinate affection. The two branches into which it divides itself are,

1. A lust after what is our own.

2. A lust after what is our neighbour's, or not ours.

First, A lust after what is our own. What God has given us, we may like and desire for the ends he has given it. But when that desire is inordinate, it is sinful, it is lust and inordinate affection, Col. 3:5. Now the desire of, or love to, or liking of what is ours, is inordinate in these several cases following, all which are here forbidden.

1. The heart's being so glued to them, that it cannot want them, cannot part with them, 1 Cor. 6:12. There is but one thing needful, Luke 10 ult. the enjoyment of God. So God has made it, and therefore he would have us sit loose to all other things. When instead of that the heart cleaves to other things, so that it cannot part with them, that is a lust to them, that must be killed by weaning therefrom, Luke 14:26. There the heart grips too hard, and must have it.

2. A too great eagerness in the using of them, when the heart casts off the band of religion and reason, and runs loose after them. Thus a man may have a lust to his own meat or drink, 1 Sam. 14:32. For our affections even to lawful things need a curb, because they are ready to be violent; and the violent pulse of the affections to them is a symptom of a feverish soul distempered by original sin.

3. The desire of them for other ends than God has allowed and appointed; for then it is carried without the rule set by the Lord, and cannot miss to be inordinate. Thus oft-times God's good creatures are desired to be fuel to lusts, Jam. 4:3, 4. To desire meat for our necessity, is not evil; but for our lusts, is not good. Whatever God has made ours, is not absolutely, but with a reserve, to wit, for such uses as he has allowed; if we go beyond that with them, it is a sinful lusting after the same, as if it were not ours at all. But, alas! in these things men are often like a tenant, who having taken a house to dwell in, would make bold to pull it down, and burn it for fuel.

4. The being led to the use of them, without reason, necessity, or expediency. Then we are under the power of them, and not they under our power, 1 Cor. 6:12. It is lawful to eat, but to be a slave to unreasonable appetite is a sin, and so in other cases. For so the soul

is degraded, and made to serve a lust, instead of commanding and regulating the desire, which ought always to be subject to right reason. And however common this is, and but little regarded, it is the native effect of original sin, which has disturbed the order and beautiful harmony of the faculties of the soul; the affections like an unruly horse, refusing to be held in by the curb of reason.

5. The using of them to the hurt either of soul or body; in that case the desire cannot but be inordinate. Our souls and bodies are the Lord's, and he says as of his own, 'Do thyself no harm.' It must needs be a lust that carries a man over the belly of this command. Yet, alas! how many such motions and affections have people to what is even their own, that to satisfy them they sacrifice both their spiritual and temporal interests! Hence it is a good rule in the use of lawful things, That then people do exceed, when by the use of them they are unfitted, either for the service of God, or their own interest.

6. The using of them without any regard to the honour of God, 1 Cor. 10:31. The glory of God should regulate us in all things, determine us to the use of what is ours, and determine us against it; all being to be cut and carved as may best suit that end.

Secondly, A lust after what is our neighbour's or not ours. Every desire of what is our neighbour's is not sinful, otherwise there could be no trading, buying, selling, exchanging, bargaining, &c. amongst men. There are holy boundaries set to these desires by the law of God; and as long as they abide within these, they are lawful; but when they exceed, they are inordinate, lustings, and coveting, and here forbidden. Now they are inordinate,

1. When the very having of them is unlawful, the desire of them is a lust, and inordinate motion. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife; for as John said to Herod, 'It is not lawful for thee to have her,' viz. his brother's wife, Matth. 14:4. What is absolutely forbidden us, we may no way desire, otherwise we do but re-act Adam's sin, in lusting after the forbidden fruit. The heart joins with those things

which God has put out of its embrace, and requires it to stand at a distance from.

2. Though the having of them may be lawful, as of our neighbour's house, servant, ox, &c. yet the desire of them may be a lust, and is so in several cases; as,

1st, When they are desired for unlawful ends, to feed some lust, as when a man desires his neighbour's drink, not for strength, but drunkenness, this is a sinful coveting, an inordinate motion to what is his, though he pay for it. O how much sin is contracted this way, that is never noticed: how many things are desired and purchased too from others, even in a lawful way, which are for no other end desired but to feed some lust? If our desires be not regulated by reason, necessity, or expediency, they are but sinful lustings. This sinful humour in the hearts of men and women, has produced many trades and inventions in the world, which had never been known if man's nature had not been corrupted. And these are maintained and encouraged, by people's care to gratify their lusts, their vanity, pride, sensuality, &c. Whereas, if they walked strictly by necessity and expediency, according to religion and reason, there would be no more use for them than there is of a third wheel to a cart. From the beginning it was not so. Therefore surely the heart is distempered, and these the disorderly motions.

2dly, When the desire sets people on unlawful means to procure them, it is a lust. Though it be lawful to have one's neighbour's servant, his ox, &c. they may be thine lawfully; yet, if thy desire set thee on underhand dealing to rob him of his servant, to cheat or wheedle him out of his ox, &c. it is coveting them with a witness. And thus lust of covetousness thus acting keeps the world in a continual ferment, so that no man is sure of another. For hardly is there a bargain made, but both buyer and seller labours to get something for this lust, as well as for his necessity and expediency. And what wonder is it, that one who has running sores in his hand, leaves some

marks of them on every thing he touches? Such is our case by natural corruption.

3dly, When the desire, though it sets not an unlawful means, yet is too eager after what is another's. This sinful eagerness discovers itself several ways, all here forbidden; as,

(1.) When people cannot wait with ease the time they are to get the thing; but the feverish desire makes them uneasy, as Rachel was with the desire of children.

(2.) When they are overjoyed with the enjoyment of it, as Jonah was with his gourd. And indeed it is hard to joy, and not overjoy, in any thing that is not God or grace.

(3.) When they are fretted and discontented at the missing of it, as Ahab was, who, for ought appears, had no mind to seek Naboth's vineyard but for money, till his wicked wife put it into his head; but he was fretted for the want of it.

(4.) When they cannot be satisfied without it, but must have it, though not truly necessary, cost what it will, as Esau was set for the red pottage that his brother had. This makes a price that they call the price of affection, which often is nothing else but the price of unreasonable fancy, which must be gratified at any rate.

4thly, When the desire singly goes out after something that Providence has put out of one's reach, though the man has no mind to seek it, nay, would not have it if it were offered him. This seems to have been David's sin, when he longed, and said, 'O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!' 2 Sam. 23:15. Some think this was a gallant soldier's wish, as if he had said, O that we could drive the Philistines' garrison out of Bethlehem! Some of the old Rabbi's think it was a pious wish, and that David longed for the Messiah that was to break out there. But it seems to be a sinful wish, as both the word which is used, Prov. 21:26; 'He coveteth greedily all the day long,' and the pointing in the

original, seem to carry it. The weather was hot, and he was thirsty, and a violent fancy took him to have a drink out of the well of Bethlehem, where he had often drank in his young days. But I cannot think that ever he meant, that any body should go fetch it at that time, ver. 17; but his men seeing the humour he was in, ventured. Thus lust breaks out, and guilt is contracted, many ways. The eyes see something that is not ours, and the heart says, O that it were mine! without any design about it. Something that God has locked up from us in providence, and the heart yearns after it, saying, O that I had it! Something we hear others have got, a good gift, bargain, or match, and the heart says, O that it had fallen to my share! and many such things, ail without any design. They are inordinate desires and lustings, for they still imply a coveting, and a dissatisfaction in some sort with our lot, which the holy law can never allow.

In all these cases the desire of what is not ours is a lust, a sinful, inordinate motion, to what is our neighbour's.

Further, to trace this lust and lusting of the heart forbidden in this command, though it is as impossible for me to follow it in its several turnings and windings, as to tell the motes that appear where the beams of the sun are shining in a room. Besides the actual fulfilling of lusts, (Eph. 2:3.) in deeds which they drive to, which belongs to other commands, there are other things forbidden here, viz.

1. Lust in the fruit fully ripe, though not fallen off in the act; that is, when the lust is not only consented to and resolved upon, but all the measures are laid for bringing it forth into action. As Haman's lust of revenge, when he had got the king's sealed letters for the destruction of the Jews; Joseph's mistress' lust, when she caught him, and said, Lie with me. This sometimes Providence blasts when come to all this ripeness, as in those cases, against the person's will. That is before God much alike as the sinful action itself. Sometimes conscience blasts it, so that the person suddenly retires as from the brink of a precipice, which he was going to throw himself over. That is before God as wanting but a very little of the sin completed. And, according

to the nature of the thing, it will be very bitter in penitent reflections on it.

2. Lust in the fruit unripe; that is, when it is consented to for action, but the means of fulfilling it are not deliberated upon. Thus people, in the hurry of a temptation, are carried so far, that their hearts say within them, they will do it. Then lust hath conceived, Jam. 1:15; when it is brought this length, a little more will bring it to the birth. But though it never come farther, it leaves as much guilt on the soul, as will make a sick conscience.

3. Lust in the blossom; that is, when though it is not consented to for action, yet it is consented to in itself, and spreads in morose delectation, as they call it, or abiding delight in the lust. That seems to be the lust especially meant, Matth. 5:28; 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart.' O what guilt is contracted this way even by the wandering of the desire, (Eccl. 6:9;) which the person has no mind to gratify by action! Thus the covetous man lusteth, and heaps up riches and wealth to himself in imagination; the proud man lusts, and heaps up honour, &c. the revengeful, &c. And all that the lust feeds on here is but mere fancy, airy nothings, which perhaps never had, nor does the man really expect will ever have, a being. This is lust dreaming, for which a conscience will get a fearful awakening; though stupid souls please themselves in it, that it does ill to no body, nor minds ill to them.

4. Lust in the bud; that is, the first risings of lust, even before the consent of the will to them; the first openings of particular lusts, sometimes not regarded nor noticed, and so neither approved nor disapproved; and sometimes checked in their very rising, Rom. 7:15. But however it be, they are sins here forbidden, though the Papists will not allow them to be so, more than Paul in his unconverted state: 'I had not known lust, except that the law had said, Thou shalt not covet,' Rom. 7:7. Who can number those that are still setting up their heads in the corrupt heart, as naturally rising from it as stench from

a dunghill, or weeds and thistles from the cursed ground? These are lustings in embryo, whereof some are formed, others not. They are happiest in this world that crush them in the bud; but happiest of all when they do not so much as bud; but it is so in heaven only.

Lastly, Lust in the seed. The seed itself is the corrupt nature, original sin, of which afterwards. But here I understand particular lusts, as pride, covetousness, &c. which are the spawn of the corruption of nature, the members of the old man, which the apostle calls us to mortify, Col. 3:5. These are they from which these cursed buds immediately sprout forth. Original sin has the lusts thereof, and these are they, Rom. 6:12. We cannot enumerate them, more than we can count the dust. But in the general.

1st, There are fleshly lusts, 1 Pet. 2:11; lust conversant about the body, and gratifying to the flesh, such as covetousness, uncleanness, sensuality, &c. In these the body drags the soul after it, and the soul goes out in these to gratify the body.

2dly, There are spiritual lusts, 2 Cor. 7:1. Eph. 2:3. There is a filthiness of the spirit as well as of the flesh, which lies more inwardly, in the mind and will, having nothing ado with the sensitive appetite, as pride, selfishness, &c. These are the two bands of lusts which the old man sends forth to maintain and advance the government of hell in the soul; but both sorts are under a sentence of condemnation from the law of God; declared rebels to heaven, and intercommuned, not to be conversed with, harboured, or entertained, but resisted, fought against, and brought to the cross. They are in good and bad; but,

(1.) In natural men they are reigning lusts, Rom. 6:12. They have the throne in the heart, and amongst them command all. But there is readily one among them, like Beelzebub, that is the prince of these devils, called the predominant sin, to which other lusts will bow, though they will not bow to God. As where pride is the predominant, it will make covetousness bow; and where covetousness

predominates, it will make pride bow. These do not always continue their rule; but the old man can pull down one, and set up another, as lust in youth may be succeeded by covetousness in old age.

(2.) In the regenerate they are but indwelling lusts, Rom. 6:12 and 7:24. They are cast down from the throne in conversion, pursued and hunted in progressive sanctification, and weakened, and utterly extirpated out of the kingdom at death. But their very being there is against the law, though they be not on the throne.

Now, these lusts are 'divers lusts,' Tit. 3:3. It is not one or two that are in the heart, but many. Their name may be legion, for they as many. The flesh, or corrupt nature is a monster with many heads; but there is one law for them all, they must die. Though they be all the birth of one belly, they are very diverse; for our natural corruption turns itself into a thousand shapes. But,

The qualities common to them all, whereby ye may see more into their nature, are these. They are,

1. Ungodly lusts, Jude. 18. There is nothing of God in them, no not so much as in the devil, who is God's creature; but they are none of God's creatures, he disowns them, 1 John 2:16. They are the creatures of a corrupt heart, generated of it, as vermin of a rotten body, by influence from hell.

2. Hellish lusts, devilish lusts, John 8:44. They were the devil's before they were our's, and so it is a sorry copy we have to write after. They are eminently in him; and those in whom they are grown to the greatest perfection, are but bunglers at the trade, to the perfection of which he has arrived. They came from him, they are pleasing to him wherever they are, and they like to be with him for evermore.

3. They are warring and fighting lusts, Jam. 4:1.

- (1.) They war against the Spirit wherever it is, Gal. 5:17. They are enemies to grace and the Spirit of grace; and the more they prevail,

the kingdom of grace is the lower in the heart. They war against the entrance of grace, and often prevail to keep it out; like so many burgeo's from hell, choaking the word that would bring it in, Mark 4:19. They war against the actings and exercise of it, till it is often laid by as in a swoon. And they war against the very being of it, which they would destroy if God had not said against it.

(2.) They war against the soul, 1 Pet. 2:11 and will ruin it, if they be not ruined. They are no other to the soul than vermin and worms to a dead corpse, that feed on it till it be destroyed. Like a sword they pierce the soul, 1 Tim. 6:10; like a fire they burn it, Rom. 1:27; and like water they drown it, 1 Tim. 6:9; for they are in the heart like the devil in the swine, that will not let the soul rest till it destroy itself.

(3.) They war amongst themselves, Jam. 4:1. For though there is a sweet harmony amongst all the graces, yet lusts may be most contrary one to another. This makes the heart often like a troubled sea, and puts a man on the rack, one lust drawing him one way, and another another way. Pride will put one forward to that which covetousness draws him back from. And the service of lusts must needs be difficult, in that they that serve them serve contrary masters.

4. They are deceitful lusts, Eph. 4:22. They are the deceivers of the soul, which, by pleasing the corrupt heart, destroy the soul; like Ezekiel's roll, sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the belly. They are a hook to the soul, covered with a taking bait; the silken cords wherewith Satan draws men into destruction.

5. They are hurtful lusts, 1 Tim. 6:9. They are hurtful to the soul and to the body, to ourselves and others. Being the brood of hell from a corrupt nature, they cannot be harmless; and therefore where no hurt can be done, they cannot enter, Rev. 21 ult. The softest of them is as a brier, and sharper than a thorn hedge, and always at length pierce the soul with many sorrows. They never fail to leave a sting behind them in the soul.

6. They are worldly lusts, Tit. 2:12. They have nothing of heaven in them. They range through the world, and feed on that which it does afford; and nothing but what is carnal can please them. They partake of the nature of the serpent, for dust is their meat, and on their belly do they go.

7. They are unsatiable lusts, 'greedy dogs that can never have enough,' Isa. 57:10. To feed them is but to enlarge their appetite, for they cry, Give, give, like the grave and the barren womb, Eccl. 1:8. Surfeited they may be, satisfied they can never be. They have a heavy task of it, that have them to provide for; no wonder they can get no other thing minded, as a poor woman that has a company of hungry babes ever hanging about her hand, and crying out of hunger.

Lastly, They are former lusts, 1 Pet. 1:14. Their reign is in the black state of nature. And indeed in all they are foremost on the throne, they have the start of grace always, being born with us, in the virtue of their cause, the corruption of nature. And the power of them must be broken by grace coming in on them, or we perish.

A view of these lusts in the glass of this holy law must needs be very humbling, and stain the pride of all glory. Though the outside be never so clean, they make a foul inside. For consider,

1. They are the members of the old man, Col. 3:5. The corruption of nature is the old man, they are his members, which together make up the body of sin. Now, this old man being entire in all the unregenerate, these lusts are all in them; nay, even in the regenerate, so far as the corruption of nature still dwells in them, though the power of them be broken, yet they still remain, and afford work to them for daily mortification. So that there is none who may not proportionally take that character to themselves, 'Being filled with all unrighteousness,' Rom. 1:29 that is to say, all manner of lusts whatsoever are in the heart of every man, though they do not all break forth in their lives. Consider,

(1.) The same corruption of nature is in all men whatsoever; all are originally and universally corrupt, John 3:6. There must then be a disposition in all to every evil thing habitually, though not actually. Dost thou see the most abominable lusts breaking forth in the lives of the worst; smite on thy breast, and say, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' and read thy own heart in their profligate lives, Prov. 27:19. 'As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.' When thou readest the law of God against these abominations which are not so much as to be named, conclude that these lusts are in thy heart, for God gives no laws in vain.

(2.) What is it man will not do, when grace restrains not, and temptation draws forward? Who would have thought the lust of adultery had been in David's heart, of idolatry in Solomon's after the Lord had appeared to him twice, blasphemy in the saints mentioned by Paul, Acts 26:11; or incest in Lot's daughters? But in such a case they broke forth, which they had not done if they had not been within before.

(3.) They are the tinder answering the sparks of Satan's temptations in the world. It was the peculiar privilege of the man Christ since Adam fell, that the prince of this world had nothing in him, John 14:30. There is never a temptation goes abroad in the world, but there is a lust in the heart akin to it, so that no wonder they embrace one another as friends when they meet. Satan by this means, be his temptation what it will, has always something to work upon, a fire to blow up. So that in every case whatsoever, that holds true, 'He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool,' Prov. 28:26.

(4.) They are the filthy matter ready to gather together in a boil in the heart, which being ripened, may break forth in the life, Jam. 1:14. They make way for gross sins, as the seed grows up into a tree that brings forth its natural fruit at length.

(5.) They are the fit opposers of every good motion, Gal. 5:17. So that there is never a good impression made upon, nor motion in the

heart, but among these lusts it finds a peculiar opposite to it, one fit to engage against it, by a peculiar malignity in it. And so it is found in the godly, that as they have grace for grace in Christ, so they have corruption for grace in the unrenewed part; still some one lineament of Satan's image to set against another of God's image.

And now these lusts have their lustings and stirrings, a view of which must be very humbling. For consider,

1st, The innumerable occasions of them; at every blink of the eye, opening of the ear, or imagination of the heart, we are in hazard of them. The sparks of temptation are continually flying about us; how can we be safe, while we have these as gunpowder about us?

2dly, How suddenly they will flee through the heart like a stitch in the side, or an arrow out of a bow? A thought, a wish, is soon brought forth.

3dly, How frequent are they? when are we free of them? when is it that the crooked leg can move, and not halt?

Lastly, How little are these things noticed? That hellish steam arising from a corrupt nature, being so much within doors, is little regarded, but extremely blackens the soul.

Thus much of the bitter streams; we come now to the fountain and spring-head, from whence they have their rise; and that is, the corruption of nature. For as there is a poisonous nature in the serpent, besides its throwing out of its venom; so, besides the sinful lustings of the heart, there is an habitual corruption of the nature, which is the root of these lustings, loathings, and inordinate motions. The reason why the clock or dial points the hour wrong is, because it is wrong set; and till that set be altered, it will never point right. So man's nature has a wrong set, which we call the corruption of nature, whereby it comes to pass that he can never act right till that set be cured by regeneration. It is a corrupt disposition of the soul, whereby it is unapt for any thing truly good, and prone to evil.

The understanding is deprived of its primitive light and ability, unable to think a good thought, 2 Cor. 3:5; yea, darkness is over all that region, Eph. 5:8. As for the will, it is free to evil, but not to good, utterly unable so much as rightly to will any thing truly good, Phil. 2:13. Nay, it is averse to it as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. It is prone and bent to evil, Hos. 11:7; but lies cross and contrary to God and goodness, Rom. 8:7. The affections are quite disordered, misplaced as to their objects, loving what they should hate, and hating what they should love; or if right as to the objects, they can keep no bounds. But of this I have spoken largely elsewhere.*

This corruption of nature is here forbidden, for it is truly and properly sin, Rom. 6:12 and 7:17. It is the flesh that lusteth against the Spirit, Gal. 5:18; and if sin, it must be contrary to and forbidden by the law. And as sinful anger is forbidden in the sixth commandment, as the immediate fountain of murder, Matth. 5:21, 22; so, by a parity of reason, the corruption of nature is forbidden here, as the immediate fountain of that coveting or lusting, expressed therein.

And though it is impossible for us to prevent this sin, being born with it, it would be considered, that this law was originally given to Adam in innocency, requiring him to keep his nature pure and uncorrupted, and so discharging all corruption of it; which law, after his sin, remains in as full force as ever. And that the second Adam might answer the demands of the law in this point, he was born without this corruption and continued ever free from it. And those that are his, being regenerated are freed from the reigning power of it, and partake of a new nature.

If we look to this sin, we have a humbling view of ourselves, and must cry Unclean, unclean.

1. It is the fountain of all actual transgressions, Mark 7:21. Look to all disorders of thy heart and life; they flow natively from hence, as the poisonous streams from the poisoned fountain. Look to the

disorders appearing in the lives of others, the fountain from whence they proceed is in thee. And if the cause be there, and the effect follow not, thank God and not thyself.

2. All particular lusts are in it, as in the seed. It is the seed-plot of all particular sins. It is the cursed ground, where, let the gardener weed as he will, new ones will still spring up. It is the cage of unclean birds, the mystery of iniquity, which we will never get to the ground of till the foundations be overturned at death.

3. We never were without it, Psal. 51:5. It is a natural and hereditary disease that cannot be cured without a miracle. We dread the serpent that is naturally poisonous, more than any thing that is accidentally so. So may we dread this beyond all things else. When we were not capable of actually sinning, this made us guilty creatures.

4. We never are free of it, while awake or asleep. It is a permanent and abiding sin. Actual sins are transient, though not as to the guilt of them, yet as to the being of them; but whether the guilt of this be removed or not, it abides as fixed with bands of iron and brass.

Lastly, We never will be free of it while we live. If we die out of Christ it will never be cured. But even though we be in him, yet it abides till death, and will never be totally removed till then.

Thus I have now gone through the ten commands, labouring to lay before you the commandment in its exceeding breadth. And though I have been far from reaching all particular duties commanded, and sins forbidden; yet, from the whole of what has been said, ye may see,

1. What a holy God we have to do with. We see his holiness in this law as in a glass. He can endure no evil thing; and there are many things which the world reckons not upon, which he abhors, and will punish.

2. What a holy law this law is, requiring all purity of nature, heart, lip, and life; a perfection both of parts and degrees; discharging all manner of impurity and moral imperfection, not only in the substance, but in the manner of action.

3. That by the works of the law no flesh can be justified. Who can come up to the perfection this law requires? what one line is there of this law that does not condemn us? where is that one point to the perfection of which we attain.

4. The preciousness and excellency of Christ, who has fulfilled this law in all its parts, has brought in everlasting righteousness, and furnishes all that believe in him with an answer to all its demands.

5. The role of righteousness, by which ye are to examine yourselves, to see your sins and shortcomings, the mark ye are to aim at if ye would be holy in all manner of conversation, which is nothing the easier to be hit that it is so broad, and the evidence of your sincerity in a perfection of those parts, though ye cannot attain to the degrees.

Lastly, Your absolute need of Christ, of his blood to sprinkle you from guilt, and of his Spirit to sanctify you, that ye may be complete in him. And therefore let this holy law be your schoolmaster to bring you to Christ for all.

OF MAN'S INABILITY TO KEEP THE LAW PERFECTLY

ECCLES. 7:20.—For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

HAVING at considerable length endeavoured to open up and explain the law of God, as abridged in the ten commandments, in some

measure in its spirituality and extent, by describing the several duties required, and sins forbidden therein; and shewn the absolute impossibility of yielding a perfect obedience thereto, in order to give a title to eternal life; and directed you to come to Christ by faith, as the end of the law for righteousness, that your guilt may be removed by the application of his blood to your consciences, and that ye may be sanctified by his Spirit: I now proceed to the exposition of the remaining questions in the Catechism, which I shall mostly discuss in a very short discourse on each, as I have been so long on the former part of this excellent composition.*

Here is the undoubted character of all the human race, fixing imperfection and sinfulness on the best of the kind in this world, and so concluding all to be liable to sin, and under it. In the words there are two things.

1. A position, There is not a just man upon earth. By the just man in this text is not meant an evangelically just man, or one just in respect of parts, though not of degrees; but one who is legally so, just in the eye of the law, as having yielded perfect obedience to all its commands; this is plain from the original pointing. Compare Psal. 143:2. 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' By this time the man Christ had not appeared on the earth: so it is meant of mere men. On the earth; to denote that in heaven they are just in that sense, arrived to legal perfection.

2. The explication of it; There is none who doeth good, and sinneth not. There are some who do good, as all the godly; but they sin withal, and that daily, for so the word is to be understood of their using to sin.

The doctrine arising from the words is.

DOCT. 'Legal perfection is not attainable in this life, but the best sin daily.' Or, 'No mere man, since the fall, is able, in this life, perfectly

to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them, in thought, word, and deed.' In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew what is legal perfection, or perfect keeping of the commands.

II. Consider the attainableness of this perfection.

III. Shew how the saints sin daily, and break the commands.

IV. Confirm the point, That perfection is not attainable in this life.

V. Give the reason of this dispensation.

VI. Apply.

I. I shall shew what is legal perfection, or perfect keeping of the commands. It is a perfect conformity of heart and life to the commands of God; and implies,

1. A perfection of the principle of action, Matth. 22:37. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' For if the heart and soul be not sinless and pure, as in innocent Adam and Christ, but be polluted as our nature is, there can be no perfect keeping of the commands of God. That pollution will stain all.

2. A perfection of the parts of obedience. No part must be lacking, every command of whatsoever nature must be kept: 'For it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,' Gal. 3:10. If one be wanting, all is wanting, all is marred. Hence says James, chap. 2:10, 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point he is guilty of all.'

3. A perfection of degrees in every part, Matth. 22:37. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.' Sincerity is not enough in the eye of the law. In every thing one must come to the highest pitch, or there is no perfection.

4. A perfection of duration or continuance, Gal. 3:10 forecited; without apostasy or defection, continuing to the end; for one bad trip after a course of obedience will mar all.

II. Let us consider the attainableness of this perfection.

1. Adam before the fall was able to have kept the commands perfectly; he might have attained it; for 'God made him upright,' Eccl. 7:29. That law was the rule of Adam's covenant-obedience; and perfect obedience to it was the condition of the covenant, which God could not have proposed to him, if he had not given him strength sufficient to perform it.

2. The man Christ, who was not a mere man, but God-man, who was not only able to keep the law perfectly, but actually did so. He made out what the first Adam failed in, to the salvation of the elect, and in their stead; and this in the whole extent of legal perfection. His obedience was perfect in the principle, Heb. 7:26 being holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; in the parts, Matth. 3:15. 'It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness;' in the degrees, John 15:13. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;' and in continuance, Phil. 2:8. 'He became obedient unto death.'

3. The saints in heaven are able, and do actually perfectly obey whatever God's will to them is: so that though in this life they do not attain it, yet in the life to come all the children of God shall attain perfection, Heb. 12:23 where mention is made of 'the spirits of just men made perfect;' and there they shall be fully freed from sin, and all possibility of sinning.

4. But since Adam fell, no mere man is able, while in this life, either of himself, or by virtue of any grace now given, to keep the commands perfectly. Of himself he cannot do it; neither is there any measure of grace given to any in this life, whereby they may be enabled to do it: for 'in many things we offend all,' Jam. 3:2. This

inability is owing to the remains of corruption that cleaves to every one of them in this mortal state, Rom. 7:23; and from which they ardently long to be delivered, ver. 24. And there is no promise of grace given in the word, whereby believers may be enabled to keep the commands of God perfectly; nor would it be consistent with the nature of spiritual growth, which is manifestly, like the natural, gradual; and it is certain that the saints do not arrive at their full stature till they come to the mansions of bliss, 1 Thess. 3:13.

III. I shall shew how the saints sin daily, and break the commands. And here I shall consider,

1. How many ways the commands may be broken.
2. In what respect the saints sin daily.
3. How these failures of theirs break the commands.

First, I am to shew how many ways the commands may be broken. They may be broken three ways, in deeds, words, and thoughts.

1. In deeds, done contrary to the command of God, or not done, though required. God's commands are the rule of men's outward life and conversation; and whatever we do or commit contrary to the law, is our sin, whether it be public, private, or secret, Psal. 14:2, 3.

2. In words, either speaking what we ought not, or not speaking what we ought, or speaking what we ought, but not in the manner commanded. (The same is to be said of actions or deeds.) God's commands are a rule to our tongues, and tell us what to speak, how to speak, and what not to speak; and by regardlessness of the rule, the tongue is 'a fire, a world of iniquity,' Jam. 3:6.

3. In thoughts. Here God's law goes beyond men's laws as to the whole kind; for our thoughts are open to God, who is omniscient, as words or actions are equally open to him, Heb. 4:13 and liable to his law. For says Christ, 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after

her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart, Matth. 5:28. And so one may sin by thinking what he ought not, by omitting of good thoughts, and by not managing good thoughts, in the manner required by the law.

Secondly, I shall shew in what respect the saints sin daily, in thought, word, and deed.

1. Negatively: not that the saints fall into gross sins daily, against the letter of the law, either in thought, word, or deed. God will disown those for saints who entertain vile thoughts daily, swear daily, lie daily, do unjust things, or neglect his worship daily, Gal. 5:19–21; 'Now, the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I also have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' Such spots are not the spots of God's people. Christ's dwelling by his spirit in them, the breaking of the reign of sin in them by the power of divine grace, and their habitual tenderness and watchfulness, hold them off that way of life. But,

2. Positively. Besides that saints may be surprised into gross sins in thought, word, and deed, sometimes by inadvertency, weakness, and violence of temptation, which is the burden of their souls, they sin every day in thought, word, and deed, when they keep the strictest watch, and have most of the divine assistance. What day passes, if without vile thoughts, yet without vain ones; without idle words, if without mischievous words; when there is not something done or undone, which God's law condemns, though perhaps the world cannot quarrel them? Besides, what good thought is thought, good word spoken, or good deed done by them, which the holy law will not spy a flaw in, as to the manner of its performance?

Thirdly, I am to shew how these failures of theirs break the commands, while they sincerely endeavour to obey them. Why, the moral law is the eternal rule of righteousness, and in whatever state the creature be, he is bound to obey his Creator, whether in a state of nature or grace, glory or damnation. And though perfection be not attainable in this life, yet it is the saints' duty, as well as that of others, Matth. 5 ult. 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' So every coming short of that perfection is their sin, needing to be taken away by Christ's blood.

And thus men daily break the commands of God in thought, word, and deed; which is the only possible way of transgressing the divine law; and our doing so in these respects shews the equity of that charge which the Lord has against every man, 'Behold thou hast done evil, as thou couldst,' Jer. 3:5.

IV. I shall now confirm the point, That perfection is not attainable in this life.

1. The scripture attests, that there is no man without sin, 1 Kings 8:46; 'For there is no man that sinneth not:' and that 'in many things we offend all,' Jam. 3:2. If any man set up for it in himself, the Spirit of God Bays he deceives himself, 1 John 1:8. See an unanswerable question, Prov. 20:9; 'Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

2. The best have a corrupt as well as a gracious principle, making the spiritual combat, never ending till death give the separating stroke, Gal. 5:17. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.'

3. We are taught always to pray for pardon, 'Forgive us our debts:' but sinless creatures need no pardons. This clearly shows, that all sin, and so come short of perfect obedience.

4. Lastly, Consider the spirituality of the law, and its extent, with human weakness, and you will see this clearly. And hence it is that perfectionists are strangers to the spirituality of the law: for if they rightly viewed it, they would be far from dreaming of having attained to perfection, which never a mere man did in this life.

Object. Noah was perfect, Gen. 6:9;* Job perfect, Job 1:8 Ans. They, and all saints, have a gospel-perfection, which is a perfection of parts. They had a comparative perfection; that is, they were more holy and circumspect than many others. But that they were not legally and absolutely perfect, is clear from Noah's drunkenness and Job's impatience. And where is the saint whose history we have at any length in scripture, but we see their imperfections recorded, to stain the pride of all glory?

But is it not said, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin?' 1 John 3:9. Ans. The meaning is not, that the saints do not sin at all; but that they do not commit sin with the full consent of the will; do not take pleasure and delight in it; do not make a trade of it, as unregenerate persons do; and do not commit the sin unto death, 1 John 5:17, 18.

Object. But seeing it is impossible to yield perfect obedience to the law, how is it consistent with the justice and wisdom of God to require of us that which we are not able to perform.

Ans. The laws of God are both possible and just; and there is no duty now required of us which he did not endow us with strength in our creation to perform. Yet in our fallen and corrupted estate, perfect obedience is become impracticable through our weakness and aversion to duty. And there can be no injustice in God to require what is impossible for us to perform, when the impossibility solely arises from our own fault. It is not God, but we ourselves, that have made the perfect observation of his laws impossible; and though we have wasted our stock, and are become bankrupts, yet he may in

righteousness exact from us that debt of obedience which we justly owe him.

Object. But are not believers delivered both from the commanding and condemning power of the law, and how are they then bound to yield any obedience to it?

Ans. Believers are certainly delivered as well from the commanding as condemning power of the law, considered only as it is the covenant of works, which requires obedience to it in order to justification; but they are by no means delivered from it as it is the law of Christ, or a rule of duty. For the moral law is the eternal rule of righteousness, a transcript of the divine perfections, which every believer is bound to copy after, and to apply to the blood of Jesus for pardon so far as he falls short of obeying it: for without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Personal holiness is as necessary to the possession of glory, or to a state of perfect holiness and happiness, as is the morning-light to the noon-day warmth and brightness; as is a reasonable soul to a wise, healthy, strong, and full-grown man; as an antecedent is to a consequent; as a part is to the whole; and as motion is necessary to evidence life. And the ten commandments, being the substance of the law of nature, a representation of God's image, and a beam of his holiness, behoved, for ever, unalterably to be a rule of life to mankind, in all possible states, conditions, and circumstances. Nothing but the utter destruction of human nature, and its ceasing to be, could divest them of that office; since God is unchangeable in his image and holiness. Hence there being a rule of life to Adam and his posterity, had no dependence on their becoming the covenant of work: but they would have been that rule, though there never had been any such covenant: yea, whatever covenant was introduced, whether of works or of grace, and whatever form might he put upon them, they behoved still to remain the rule of life. No covenant, no form whatsoever, could ever prejudice this their royal dignity.

V. I shall give the reason of this dispensation. God could make the saints perfect in the moment of conversion. He does it not. So it seems good in his sight. Many things are said to account for this; but what is most satisfying is, that it doth exalt the freedom of grace and the power of it most, Eph. 2:4, 7; 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us—that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.' The more sins are pardoned to a sinner, he is the deeper in Christ's debt. The faster the root of sin appears in one's nature, the more appears the power of grace in rooting it up. It is surely the glory of our great Pilot, that he brings the broken ship to land, through so many hazards.

Caution. Abuse not this doctrine, to think light of sin because of it. It is the worst of diseases which most men die in, and no man is perfectly cured of until death. Make not your way to hell the easier, because of the difficulties in the way to heaven: for they that strive towards perfection here will get it at death, when ye sitting still at your ease will be carried down the stream to destruction.

Keep not ye some particular lust, because none are perfect: for all the saints are perfect in parts, though not in degrees; so far perfect, as to 'hate every known sin,' Psal. 119:128.

Inf. 1. There is no justification, favour, and peace with God, by our own works, Psal. 143:2. 'In thy sight shall no man living be justified.' Far less can there be works of supererogation. We must be justified by the righteousness of Christ received by faith, or not at all.

2. Whatever your attainments be, be not proud of them; your wants and defects may always keep you humble. The barren branches are towering ones, while the fruitful boughs hang down their heads.

3. Inexpressibly miserable is the case of unbelievers. They are without Christ; they must stand or fall by the law, and it is quite beyond their power to keep it.

4. Bear one another's burdens; for every man offends. We are in an hospital where most are dying of their disease, and the best but in the way of recovery.

Lastly, Let the struggling saints long for heaven, for there the perfection they would fain be at shall be attained, and not till then. And this may comfort them under all their failures, which they mourn over, that in the other world they shall arrive at full perfection in holiness.

OF SIN IN ITS AGGRAVATIONS

EZEK. 8:15.—Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these.

IF we look on sin absolutely, and in itself, as it is a transgression of the divine law, no sin is small, but a great evil, greater than any evil of suffering, which men can be exposed to: but if we look on sin comparatively, one sin compared with another, all are not alike, but some greater than others, as we see from these words. Wherein may be observed,

1. Great sins which the prophet had seen, shewn to him in vision by the Lord himself, who knows the sins of all men, with their nature and qualities, ver. 5, 11, 14.

2. Greater sins he was yet to see. He had seen the image of jealousy, namely, the image of Baal, set up at the gate of the altar, ver. 5; the chambers of imagery in some of the courts, and the ancients of Israel, at their idolatrous service, ver. 10, 11; the women weeping for Tammuz in the court of the women, or of the priests, by which the Lord's courts were turned into stews. These were great abominations, and yet greater than any of these was their

worshipping of the sun, ver. 16 and that in God's account: for it was done in a more sacred place, at the very door of the temple; it was more public, and had greater contempt of God in it, than the rest.

The text affords this doctrine:

DOCT. 'All sins are not alike;' but 'some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What is understood by the heinousness of sin.

II. In what respect some sins are more heinous than others.

III. Apply.

I. I am to shew what is understood by the heinousness of sin. Its great offensiveness is hereby understood. Sin may be offensive unto men; but we consider it here as sin, and offensive to God. So for sin to be heinous in the sight of God, implies,

1. That it is offensive to God, displeasing to him, and grieving to to his Spirit, Jer. 44:4. 'Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate.' He cannot away with it, he cannot endure it before his eyes, but shews his indignation against it. It is an abominable thing before the Lord; hence it is called filthiness, uncleanness, vomit, &c all which provoke loathing; so Rev. 3:16 it is said, 'I will spue thee out of my month.' It is contrary to his nature and will, and gives him displeasure and offence; and, if it were possible it would disturb his repose, as smoke doth to the eyes, Isa. 65:5. 'These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.'

2. It is greatly offensive to God; for that also is implied in the notion of heinousness; every fault is offensive, but some faults are heinous offences. Such an offence is sin to God. It gives him great offence,

Psal. 5:4, 5. 'Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' Hab. 1:13. 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity. There is no sin that God is indifferent about, none that he can pass without a mark of his indignation on it: He 'will by no means clear the guilty,' Exod. 34:7.

Now here mark well two things.

1. That all sin is heinous in the sight of God, viz. greatly offensive. There are no small sins before God, though some are greater than others; but the least of them is great in itself, and great in his sight, Hab. 1:13 forecited. This is plainly implied, while it is said, 'Some sins are more heinous than others.'

2. That there are degrees of heinousness. Though the sin which the blinded soul accounts but a mote, is a mountain in the eyes of God and of an enlightened conscience, yet all are not alike for all that; but as some mountains, so some sins are greater than others.

II. I shall shew in what respects some sins are more heinous than others.

First, Some sins are in themselves, and in their own nature, more heinous than others. There are some capital offences, as it were, which God's wrath does in a special manner burn against, and which are most provoking to the eyes of his glory: such as murder, Gen. 4:10; oppression, Hab. 2:11; which are noted to be crying sins; blasphemy and contempt of God, Exod. 5:2; idolatry, Ezek. 8; unbelief, rejecting of Christ, and disobeying the gospel, Matth. 22. John 3:19. 2 Thess. 1:8. But of all sins the most heinous is the sin against the Holy Ghost, Matth. 12:31.

Secondly, Some sins are more heinous than others by their aggravations; and the greater and more numerous the aggravating

circumstances be that attend any sin, it is the more heinous. Now, sins are aggravated, or made greater or more heinous than others,

1. From the persons offending; the more notable they are, the more heinous are their sins; as the greater the fire is, the more mischief will it do, if it go out of its place; the greater the tree is, the more mischief will it do by its fall. Thus one and the same sin is greater in magistrates, ministers, parents, and the aged, than in subjects, people, children and the younger sort. For men's places and offices, which respect the government of others in the way of holiness and justice, aggravate their sins, Rom. 2:21. 'Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, doest thou steal?' And so do the greater gifts and profession that one hath, Luke 12:47, 48. 'That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more.' And so doth the greater experience of God's goodness which they have had, as in the case of Solomon, of whom it is said, 1 Kings 11:9. 'The Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice.' For such advantages make their sins more pernicious, in respect of the influence of their example on others, as in the effect of Peter's dissimulation at Antioch, Gal. 2:13 of whom it is said, 'And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. And these advantages carry them over greater obligations they are under to the Lord.'

2. From the parties offended. Let men consider whom their sins strike against, if they would see how heinous they are. For as a thrust in a leg or arm is not so much grievous as one at the heart, so is it in this case.

1st, Sins immediately against God, his Son, and his Spirit, are more heinous than such sins against man, any man whatsoever, 1 Sam. 2:25. 'If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him? Thus lying and dissembling to God, is more heinous than lying to men, as appears in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:4 because of the infinite distance of the immediate objects of the sin. Thus, whereas in all sins of the second table, there is a fault against God, and against man too; yet the fault against God, and the injury done to his glory, is the bitterest ingredient in it. Thus David's sin in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah was a great sin in respect of these persons; but See how he confesses it, Psal. 51:4. 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.'

2dly, Sins against superiors in the church, state, and family, are more heinous than the same sins are, if done against persons of their own rank and condition. The reason is, because superiority given of God is such a divine impress on a man, that it makes his character in some sort sacred, as in the case of Moses, Num. 12:8. Hence it is that disobedience to parents is so heinous a sin, Prov. 30:17. 'The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.'

3dly, Sins against those whom we are under special engagements and obligations to, are more heinous than such sins against others we have no such concern in. Religion teaches gratitude, and Sets a black mark on ingratitude, Psal. 55:12. 'For it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have born it; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him.'

4thly, Sins against the saints and people of God are more heinous than against others, because of their relation to God, as being those in all the world dearest to him, Matth. 18:6. 'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in

the depth of the sea.' Such are sins against weak saints, as being more liable to get harm by them than those who are strong, Rom. 14:15. 'If thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.'

Lastly, Sins against the common good of all, or of many; for the wider the effects of one sin go, it is still the worse, Josh. 22:20. 'Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity.' 'One sinner,' says Solomon, 'destroyeth much good;' and the more the greater is his sin.

3. From the quality of the offence. A Sin may be vested with such qualities as will make it much more heinous than when divested of them. These evil qualities are many; I will reduce them to two Heads.

(1.) Intrinsic qualities. Thus sins against the letter of the law are more heinous than others; mother-sins, which are big and bring forth many others, besides simple ones; sins consummated by action, as well as while merely in the heart, Jam. 1:15; sins that are scandalous, as well as others not so; sins the injury in which to men admits of no reparation, more than that of others in which it does. This was the reason why death was the punishment of adultery, not of fornication because in this last case the man was obliged to marry the woman.

(2.) Extrinsic qualities; which again are of two sorts.

[1.] Being done against means whereby one might be with-held from sin, Matth. 11:21, 22. 'Wo unto thee, Chorazin, wo unto thee, Bethsaida: for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you.' Thus one's sinning against mercies drawing them from their sin, judgments and rebukes from the word or providence, from God or men, sinning

against the light of one's own conscience, do all of them aggravate sin.

[2.] Being done against bonds one has taken on him against the sin, when men sin against purposes and resolutions of amendment, against their covenants and engagements to the Lord, whereby they are bound to stand off from such courses, Ezek. 17:19.

4. From the manner of committing it. Who can imagine, but sin done deliberately, and wilfully, and presumptuously, is more heinous than sin committed through inadvertency and weakness? If one be impudent in his sin, delight in it, and boast of it; if he go on in it obstinately, fall into it frequently, and relapse into it after convictions and humblings for it; every one of these aggravates the guilt.

5. From the time of it, as in the case of Gehazi, 2 Kings 5:26 where Elisha says to him, 'Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and olive yards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men-servants, and maid servants?' Thus sins committed on the Lord's day, immediately before or after divine worship, are more heinous than at other times. And so is sinning just after reproofs, warnings, engagements; or in a time when the anger of the Lord is going out against the land, family, or person, as Ahaz in his distress.

Lastly, From the place of it. Thus in a place where the gospel is preached, sin is more heinous than elsewhere, Isa. 26:10. 'Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord.' Sins done in public before others, are more heinous than those in secret; for in the former many may be denied, as in the case of Absalom, lying with his father's concubine on the house top.

A few inferences shall conclude this subject.

Inf. 1. Never think light of sin, nor slightly of Christ, and your need of him, since all sin is heinous in God's sight, and exposes the sinner to his just vengeance.

2. There will be degrees of torment in hell, though the least degree will be dreadful, Matth. 11:21 since there are degrees of sinning.

3. No wonder God's anger go out against us, and the land wherein, and the generation amongst whom we live: For heinous are our sins beyond those of many, and a frightful look may we get of them in this glass. Magistrates, ministers, parents, the aged, professors, sons and daughters of the Lord, have corrupted their ways, as well as others. Our sins have struck immediately against God, and against those who are vested with his authority in the state, in the church, and in families, against his people, and the common good. Sins against the letter of the law, scandalous offences abound, over the belly of light, mercies, and judgments, covenants national, sacramental, and personal; and these continued in obstinately, in a time when the Lord's hand has oft been stretched out and drawn in again, in a land of light.

4. Repent, and flee to the blood of Christ for pardon, if so be our heinous sins may not be our ruin.

5. The means of grace which we enjoy will either promote our salvation, or they will aggravate our damnation.

6. When ye examine yourselves, and think on your sins, consider the several aggravations of them; and lie deep in the dust before the Lord on account thereof; and, through the grace of God, abstain from every sin, and all appearance of evil.

OF THE DESERT OF SIN

GAL. 3:10.—It is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

THOUGH some sins be greater than others, yet there is no sin but deserves damnation, which we can no where better learn than from the voice of the law, which is the verdict of a just God upon the demerit of sin. This verdict in the text is found written, Deut. 27 ult. 'Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them.' And herein consider,

1. The party condemned by the law; every sinner. The law condemns him for omissions as well as commissions, for breaking off from obedience as well as never entering upon it; for every sin, even the least sin, the least breach of the law; as well as the greatest: Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, &c.

2. The doom pronounced in all these cases, is God's wrath and curse; Cursed is he that continueth not in all things, &c. This curse binds over to wrath in this life and that which is to come. It is God's own voice in his law, whose justice will not allow him to fix a punishment on sin greater than it deserves. Hence the doctrine is,

DOCT. 'Every sin serveth God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come.'

Here I shall shew,

- I. What is God's wrath and curse, which every sin deserves.

- II. What this wrath and curse is.

- III. That there is no sin which does not deserve God's wrath and curse.

- IV. Deduce some inferences.

I. I shall shew, what is God's wrath and curse which every sin deserves.

First, God's wrath is no passion nor is there any perturbation in God, though an angry God. His wrath is a fire without smoke, and may be taken up in these two things.

1. God's displeasure against the sinner, Psal. 5:4, 5. 'For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' Sin makes the soul loathsome and hateful in God's sight, kindles a holy fire in his heart against the sinner. Were the sun continually under a cloud, and the heavens always covered with blackness, none of these would be comparable to the state of a sinner under wrath, Psal. 90:11. 'Who knoweth the power of thine anger?'

2. God's dealing with sinners as his enemies, whom he is incensed against, Neh. 1:2. 'God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth, the Lord revengeth and is furious, the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries: and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.' Isa. 1:24. 'Ah! I will ease me of my adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.' The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion; what then must the wrath of God be, an enemy, whom we can neither fight nor flee from, neither outwit nor outbrave? Of this wrath it is said, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'

Secondly, His curse is his separating one to evil, Deut. 29:21. 'And the Lord shall separate him unto evil, out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses that are written in this book of the law.' It is a devoting the sinner to destruction, to all the direful effects of the divine wrath. It is the tying of the sinner to the stake, setting him up for the mark of God's vengeance, that a broken law and offended justice may disburden all their arrows into him, and that on him may meet together all miseries and plagues, flowing from the wrath of God.*

II. I shall shew, what is God's wrath and curse in this life and that which is to come.

1. In this life they comprehend all the miseries of this world which one meets with on this side of time, miseries on the body, relations, name, estate, employment; miseries on the soul, as blindness, hardness, vile affections, horrors of conscience, &c. and, finally, death in the separation of soul and body. Thus they make a flood of miseries in this life.

2. In the life to come, they comprehend eternal death and damnation, and an eternal being under the punishment of loss and sense in hell. So they make a shoreless sea of miseries in the life to come. But of both these I spoke largely in a former part of this work. [Vol. i.]

III. I proceed to shew, that there is no sin which does not deserve these, but that every sin deserves this wrath and curse.

1. The wages of every sin is death, Rom. 6:23 that is, eternal death, as is clear from the opposition to eternal life, Rom. 5:12. 'As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' Job 24:19. 'The grave consumes those which have sinned.'

2. Every sin is a breach of the law; and he who breaks it in one point, is guilty of all, Jam. 2:10. He who is guilty of all deserves the wrath of God both in this life and that which is to come. The commands of the law have all one author, whose majesty is offended by whatsoever breach; they all meet in one command, viz. love, and every sin is against that; the law requires universal obedience.

3. Christ died for all the sins of all his elect, 1 Pet. 3:18. 1 John 1:7. Wherefore, since he suffered God's wrath and curse for them, they certainly deserve it.

4. The least sin will condemn a man, if it be not forgiven, Matth. 5:19; even idle words, Matth. 12:36, 37; and all must be forgiven graciously, Psal. 103:2; wherefore God might in justice not forgive them; and if never forgiven, they may be ever punished.

IV. I come to shew, why every sin deserves so much. The reason is, it is a kind of infinite evil; and therefore, since the punishment is deservedly proportioned to the offence, it deserves infinite punishment. Sin is an infinite evil in two respects.

1. In respect that the guilt and defilement of it is never taken away, but endures for ever, unless the Lord himself in mercy do remove it. The party offended is the eternal God, whose being never comes to an end; The sinner never being able to expiate and put away his offence, Rom. 5:6 it ever remains, unless the Lord himself do remove it, as in the elect by his Son's blood; wherefore the party offended, and the offence over remaining, the punishment must needs be eternal; for no unclean thing can ever enter heaven, therefore the sinner must be for ever excluded and punished.

2. In respect it wrongs an infinite God. It is evident among men, that the demerit of a crime rises and falls according to the quality of the person against whom it is committed; so that a crime against one's prince is punished with death, that would not be so, if against a person of meaner condition. Since God, then, is of infinite dignity and majesty, the offence against him deserves infinite punishment. And because the creature, being finite, is not capable of punishment infinite in value, therefore it is necessarily infinite in duration. There is a manifold wrong to God in the least sin.

(1.) It wrongs his infinite sovereignty, Jam. 2:10, 11. He is Sovereign Ruler of his creatures; his will must be their law, since by his will they were created. But every sin casts off the natural yoke of his sovereign authority, and sets up the sinner's will against it. So that it is accounted a fighting against God, Acts 5:39.

(2.) It wrongs his infinite goodness, Exod. 20:1, 2. All the good natural, moral, or spiritual, which the creature has, it has it from God, who is the fountain of all good. So that sin is a doing ill for good, the worst of ills for all the good one ever at any time enjoyed. Yea, it is a turning of the good received from God against him; as if one advanced from the dunghill by his prince, should use all his favours in rebellion against him.

(3.) It wrongs his holiness, Hab. 1:13. He cannot endure unholiness. He is omniscient and omnipresent; so sin brings into the presence of the great King, that which by all things he cannot endure to look at. It sets up the worst of defilement before his spotless holiness; and does in its own nature tend to deface the glory of it.

(4.) Lastly, It breaks his law, the eternal rule of righteousness, 1 John 3:4. It is all right, and of perpetual equity, and is the hedge which God has set about his rational creatures: but sin breaks down that hedge, and breaks over it. And the sinner is a rebel against the King's law, 1 Sam. 15:23; and in effect sets God at defiance, inasmuch as it breaks the law, to which such a penalty is annexed.

I shall now deduce some inferences.

Inf. 1. Let this commend the love of Christ in dying for sinners, Rom. 5:8. O matchless love, which made him willing to be made a curse for us, that we might be delivered from the curse of the law! Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse. What a flood of wrath behoved then to come on him, when he stood in the stead of a whole elect world!

2. Let this convince you of the ill that is in sin. There is more ill in the least sin than the greatest sufferings. Therefore never say, in compliance with a temptation, It is but a little one; for the least sin will make you eternally miserable in hell: and can ye account that a little evil which exposes to God's curse here and hereafter?

3. Inexpressibly terrible is the deserving of many sins, and gross sins, when the least of them deserve God's wrath. If one do so, how great

must that wrath be, which thousands and millions deserve? If an idle word deserves God's wrath and curse, what must deliberate lying words deserve, but a deep footing in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

4. Let believers admire free grace, pardoning mercy, and atoning blood, Psal. 32:1; that secures them from bearing the desert of their sin. Let them live to the Lord, by whom they live. Think not little of your sins, O believer, though there be now no condemnation for you, being in Christ Jesus, Rom. 8:1; for every one of your sins deserves, though they cannot bring on, God's wrath and curse. Yet tremble at the thoughts of sin; for ye are like the three children in the fiery furnace, compassed with a fire of sin that would burn you up, but the effect of it is stopped by the mediation of Christ.

Lastly, Sinners, be convinced of your absolute need of Christ. Ye must be in him, else ye are ruined for ever. Can ye bear that wrath which incensed justice will inflict on all that are out of Christ? Can ye get free of it without him? Wherefore be alarmed, and exhorted to flee from the wrath that is to come, by fleeing to the Lord Jesus who delivereth all his people from it.

OF THE MEANS OF SALVATION IN GENERAL

HEB. 2:3.—How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?

A SINNER having heard that sin deserves God's wrath and curse, the question that natively follows is, What way one may escape them? This is answered by the weighty question in the text, How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? Which we may take up in these two things. (1.) There is no escaping for sinners, if they neglect the great salvation; they perish without remedy. (2.) They that do not neglect it, shall surely escape. Here let us consider,

1. The danger sinners are in by their sin. They are in, hazard of perishing under God's wrath and curse; for that is the just recompense of every sin, Heb. 2:2; of God's wrath consuming them, and his curse binding them down under it for ever. He intimates, that all are liable to God's wrath and curse, while he says, How shall we escape, &c.

2. The way how they may escape; namely, by not neglecting, but falling in with the great salvation. The words intimate, (1.) That there is a possibility of escaping; sinners are not shut up hopeless under the curse. (2.) The way of escape is not by fleeing from the Judge, and the execution of his sentence: nay, he is omniscient and omnipresent; one cannot outwit him, or get away from his sight, or out of his reach. Nor is it by resisting for he is omnipotent, and none can outbrave him, nor make head against him. But he may escape by falling in with the means of escape appointed by himself, and required by him to be made use of by us. He has provided us with a salvation, a great one; i. e. the gospel, which teaches the way of eternal salvation. He requires us, not to neglect it, but to improve it for our escape. It is neglected by unbelief, impenitency, and not using

the means prescribed. On the contrary, then, he requires of us faith and repentance, which are the substance of the gospel, Acts 20:21; 'testifying to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ;' and he requires of us the use of the means by which the salvation held forth in the gospel is obtained, Prov. 8:34; 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors:' for surely they neglect and slight the gospel, who do not believe, repent, or use the ordinary means of obtaining the salvation.

The test affords the following doctrine.

DOCT. 'Whoso would escape God's wrath and curse must not neglect, but fall in with the great salvation,' or, 'To escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requireth of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, with the diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption.'

For explaining this, I shall shew,

I. The necessity of faith in Jesus Christ, in order to one's escaping the wrath and curse of God.

II. The necessity of repentance, in order to the same end.

III. Answer the question, Are faith and repentance in men's power, since God requires them of them?

IV. Shew the connexion betwixt faith and repentance, and escaping the wrath and curse of God.

V. The necessity of the diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption.

VI. Deduce an inference or two.

I. I shall shew the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ, in order to one's escaping the wrath and curse of God due to him for sin. It is absolutely necessary; no man can escape God's wrath and curse without it. For,

1. There is no pleasing God without it, Heb. 11:6. The reason is, because he is only pleased with Jesus Christ, and those who are in him or united to him, Matth. 17:5. If one should weep for his sins till no moisture were left in his body, fast his flesh to a skeleton, and watch ever so carefully against his sin, if he have not faith, he is a lost man; he cannot please God, but must lie for ever under his displeasure.

2. It is the great duty of the gospel, whereby one is made partaker of the remedy provided, and without which neither your persons nor performances can be accepted. 'It is the work of God,' John 6:29; 'the command of God,' 1 John 3:23. Your persons will ever be under condemnation without it, John 3:18. And all your other duties will be but ciphers in God's account, multiply them as ye will, if faith be not at the head of them.

3. It is that which enters one into the covenant of peace; unites him with Christ, and by which he comes to partake of all saving benefits. If ye would escape God's wrath, ye must be within the covenant; ye must believe, that is, consent to the marriage-covenant, John 6:35. There is no escaping wrath without being in Christ, and united to him, Rom. 8:1. That union is by faith, Eph. 3:17. We must be justified, and that is by faith, Rom. 5:1; and sanctified, which is also by faith, Acts 15:9.

4. Salvation and damnation turn upon this very point. Here is the decision of the case, Mark 16:16; 'He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' Unbelief will undoubtedly ruin you, Psal. 2 ult. 'Kiss ye the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.' Unbelief is a rejecting of Christ; and they cannot escape who refuse the remedy of

sin, Luke 19:27; 'Those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.'

II. I proceed to shew the necessity of repentance, in order to one's escaping this wrath and curse. No adult person can be saved without it. As for infants dying in their tender years, and such others who are not capable of actual faith and repentance, in so far as the Spirit dwells in them, they have the seed of those graces, and shall undoubtedly be saved.

1. The word of God certifies us, that whosoever does not repent shall perish, Luke 13:5. Your souls, then, lie at stake. The sinner is gone away from God, and so is come under the curse. His soul is left in pawn that he shall return; so if he do not return the pawn is lost, and lost for ever.

2. Heaven's door is bolted against all impenitent sinners; it is not so wide as to let in a sinner with a burden of unrepented-of guilt upon his back, Rev. 21:27; 'There shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.' So heaven ye cannot see, and hell ye cannot escape, if ye repent not. It is the call of the gospel to you; which, if it be not obeyed, see the effect, 2 Thess. 1:7, 8. 'The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.' To this narrow point the matter is brought, Repent or perish, Ezek. 18:30, 31; 'Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?'

3. Repentance is the other duty of the gospel; thereby signifying, that without repentance there is no possibility but we must perish under God's wrath and curse. John the Baptist preached repentance, so did Christ himself, the apostles, &c. How can one think then to escape without it?

4. True faith does always bring along with it true repentance, Zech. 12:10. 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.' It is the great gift which Christ is exalted to give, Acts 5:31; as he is a Saviour. So impenitent sinners have no part in Christ, nor in his salvation, Matth. 1:21; and therefore they must perish.

III. I proceed to consider the question, Are faith and repentance in men's power, since God requires them of them? Ans. They are not. For God's demands of us are the measure of our duty, but not of our strength, which reaches not to these. For,

1. They are the gifts of God, and the operations of his special grace, Eph. 1:19. Acts 5:31. And where sovereign pleasure does not determine to give and work them, the party lies under the power of unbelief and impenitency. Hence it is God's grace and good-will which makes one differ from another; not man's free-will. Hence says our Lord, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight,' Matt. 11:25, 26.

2. Sinners by nature, and in themselves, can do nothing which is good, and therefore cannot believe nor repent, John 15:5. 'Without me ye can do nothing,' 2 Cor. 3:5. 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God.' In particular they cannot believe, John 6:44. 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath Sent me, draw him.' They cannot repent, Jer. 13:23. 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.' They are dead in sin, and must be quickened, yea, created in Christ Jesus to good works. They are in bondage to sin and Satan, 2 Tim. 2:26; therefore cannot come to Christ, nor turn to God, till effectual

grace bring them forward, Acts 26:18. 'Open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.'

Object. How then can God require them of us?

Ans. 1. God gave man this power, and he has lost it by his own fault, Eccl. 7:29. 'God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.' If a debtor squander away his substance, the creditor has still a right to require what he owes him: so, though man has lost his power to perform, God has not lost his right to require the duty.

2. Men will not believe their own impotency. They will promise, resolve, and delay to believe and repent, as if these duties were in their own power; they will slight the motions of God's Spirit; yea, they are throwing away the remains of natural light and strength, that have escaped out of the ruins of the fall. So that God may very justly require these of them, to convince them, and stir them up to seek grace.

IV. I proceed to shew the connection betwixt faith and repentance, and escaping the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin. Those who believe and repent shall certainly escape. God has said it, that they shall, John 5:24. 'He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life,' Ezek. 18:30. 'Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.' Nay, they are got beyond it already, Rom. 8:1. 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' In the moment the sinner comes into Christ, he is no more liable to eternal wrath, nor to the curse; for he is not under the law, but under grace: and the utmost he is liable to, is fatherly chastisements, Psal. 89:30–33. Thus faith and repentance have the connection of appointed means prescribed by God himself, which, by his blessing, are rendered subservient to this great end, of obtaining salvation. Faith is the hand that receives Christ and his

righteousness, as the all of salvation, John 1:12; and repentance unto life consists in that godly sorrow for sin, flowing from faith, which is the exercise of all who are concerned about the salvation of their souls, Jer. 50:4. 2 Cor. 7:11.

V. I shall now shew the necessity of using all the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to his people the benefits of redemption.

1. God has peremptorily required this, Luke 13:24. 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate,' namely, that we strive in the appointed means of grace and salvation. And so he has particularly enjoined us the conscientious performance of each of them.

2. We have no ground to expect grace or salvation but in the use of the means, Prov. 8:34. 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors,' Prov. 2:3–5. 'If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding: if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.' 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,' Rom. 10:17.

3. The neglect of the means is a contempt of the thing. If we would be healed, we would lie at the pool. If not, we say we care not for cure.

And there is required here, not a careless or merely superficial use of the outward means, but a diligent one; that is an embracing of every opportunity that God in his providence gives us for attending upon them, a careful improvement of them, and a looking earnestly to him for his blessing upon them, without which they will not contribute to our spiritual advantage, 1 Cor. 3:6, 7.

Quest. What is our ability in this point? Ans. The use of outward means is not beyond our reach. One may without saving grace, read, hear, pray, and consider his case. And by these one may attain the highest pitch of preparation for the grace of God, in legal convictions,

fears, sorrows for sin, and natural (though not saving) desires of grace. Therefore do what ye can; it may be, while ye are doing what ye can, God will do for you what ye cannot do for yourselves, Acts 8:22.

Quest. Has God promised to save and convert those who do what is in their power in the use of means? Ans. We dare not say it. But, 1. It is possible. 2. It is probable.*

I shall conclude with two inferences.

Inf. 1. Then as ever ye would escape God's wrath and curse due to us for sin, repent and believe. Come to Christ; turn from your sins unto God. There is no safety otherwise, but this way ye shall be safe. No sin of your's will ruin you, if you believe and repent; and nothing will save you if you do not.

2. Be diligent in the use of the means of salvation. They are laid before you, while they are by the sovereign disposal of Providence, kept from others. Neglect them not, as ye would be found to reject the counsel of God against yourselves. And satisfy not yourselves in the bare use of them, but seek grace and salvation in them from Jesus Christ, they being the appointed means of grace.

OF FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

JOHN 1:12.—But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name.

FAITH in Jesus Christ being the main thing required for one's escaping the wrath and curse of God, we come now to speak of it

particularly, from these words. In which we have, (1.) The nature, (2.) The fruit of faith, viz. the privilege and dignity of adoption into God's family. Passing the latter, [See vol. i.]

We may take notice of the former, viz. the nature of faith, As many as received, &c. Wherein consider,

1. What it is in the general. It is a saving grace, for by it one becomes a child of God, and so an heir of heaven.

2. What it is in particular, (1.) The object of it is Christ, he, his name, his person, with his benefits. The acts of it, saving the sinner, are, [1.] Receiving him; this is explained to be believing. Now, receiving implies an offer of him made to the receiver, which is done in the gospel. [2.] Resting on him; for it is not a mere believing him, by an historical assent to his word, but a believing on his name, which imports a fiducial recumbency or relying on him, as one who believes another is said to rest on his word. (2.) The subjects of it are many; not all, but some, namely, the elect of God, quickened by the spirit of regeneration, compare ver. 13. 'Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' These receive Christ for salvation; for he offers himself as a Saviour, and the fruit of it in the text is saving.

The doctrine founded on the text is,

DOCT. 'Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace whereby we receive, and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.'

Here we will consider,

I. How faith in Christ is a saving grace.

II. Whence it proceeds.

III. The subject of faith.

IV. The object of it.

V. The saving and justifying acts of it.

VI. The end of these acts of faith.

VII. The ground and warrant of it

VIII. Lastly, Draw an inference or two.

I. I shall shew, how faith in Christ is a saving grace. There are four sorts of faith spoken of in scripture. (1.) Historical faith, which is a bare assent to the truths of God, Jam. 2:19. 'Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well. The devils also believe and tremble.' (2.) A temporary faith, which is such an assent, joined with some affection to the truths of God, though unsanctified, like that of the stoney ground hearers, Luke 8:13. 'who when they hear, receive the word with joy; but these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.'

(3.) The faith of miracles, which is a belief of the Lord's working some miraculous effect by us, or in us, upon some intimation of his word concerning it, 1 Cor. 13:2.—'Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains.' All of these may be in reprobates, and none of them are saving. (4.) Saving faith, already described from the text.

It is called saving faith, because all that have it shall certainly be saved for ever, from sin and God's wrath; yea, as soon as one has it, salvation is his, it is in his possession as to the beginnings of it, Acts 16:31. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

It saves us, not as an act or work, fulfilling the condition of a new law; for so it is excluded, with all other works, from the causing of our salvation, Rom. 3:27, 28. 'Where is boasting then? it is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the

law.' But it saves us as an instrument, apprehending Christ and his salvation, Rom. 3:22. 'Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all, them that believe; for there is no difference.' It is as the looking to the brazen serpent, which saved the stung Israelites; or as the hyssop dipped in blood, and sprinkling the leper, that cleansed him.

II. I come to shew, whence this faith proceeds.

1. It is not from our natural powers, the power of man's free-will. 'No man can come to me,' says Christ 'except the Father which hath sent me, draw him,' John 6:44. It is not a flower of nature's garden; otherwise one should make himself to differ from others.

2. It is a special gift of God. Hence says the apostle to the Philippians, chap. 1:29. 'Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ,—to believe on him.' It is wrought in the heart by his divine power, 'through the faith of the operation of God, Col. 2:12. No less power can produce it, Eph. 1:19. It is ascribed, as to the working of it, to the Father, John 6:44 forecited; to the Son, Cant. 1:4. 'Draw me;' but in a special manner to the Spirit, Gal. 5:22. 'The fruit of the Spirit is—faith; therefore he is called 'the Spirit of faith,' 2 Cor. 4:13.

The outward means which the Lord usually makes use of to beget faith in one's heart, is the word, the word of the gospel, preached, heard, or read, Rom. 10:17. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' This is the incorruptible seed which the new creature is framed of, 1 Pet. 1:23 the vehicle of saving influences, Gal. 3:2.

III. I proceed to consider the subject of faith. It is not all men, 2 Thess. 3:2. 'For all men have not faith.' They are rare ones who get it, Luke 18:8. 'When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? But they are,

1. Elect sinners; they only obtain it, Tit. 1:1. And they all do obtain it sooner or later, before they go off the world, Act 13:48. 'As many as

were ordained to eternal life believed.' The subjects of it are those of the Old Testament as well as those under the New. Hence the apostle to the Hebrews, speaking of the former, says, chap. 11:13. 'These all died in faith.' The subjects of it also are elect infants dying in infancy, though they have not actual faith; who, though they knew nothing of the matter, like the Israelitish infants, Deut. 1:29 have the seed or spirit of faith. This is the general character of the subject. But,

2. More particularly, elect convinced sinners are the subjects of it, John 16:8, 9. 'When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believed not on me.' The plough of the law goes through the heart, in some measure, before this seed be cast into it, Gal. 3:23, 24. 'Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith, which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.' So that an unconvinced, insensible sinner, is an unbeliever. But,

3. Yet more particularly, elect, convinced, quickened sinners, are the subject thereof, as appears from the text and the following verse. Regeneration in the order of nature goes before believing, and faith is the first vital motion of the regenerated soul. There is first a passive reception of Christ into the soul, whereby Christ comes into the dead soul, and quickens it, and then actual believing, or active receiving of Christ, is the first motion of the new creature. But most particularly,

4. Lastly, Not only the understanding, but the heart and will of such a one, is the subject of faith, where it has its seat; the understanding knowing and assenting, and the will embracing and consenting, Isa. 53:11. 'By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many,' Rom. 10:10. 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.'

IV. I proceed to consider the object of faith.

1. The real object in general is the whole word of God, and therefore no falsehood can be under faith, Tit. 1:2. But the special real object of it is the promise of the gospel, Acts 16:31. 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,' &c. for therein Christ the Saviour is held forth to a poor sinner. Faith looks to the whole word; it is persuaded of a divine authority in the commands, and an immoveable truth in the threatenings and promises. Every promise of the word it looks to, and comes wrong to none, while the believer lives in this world, and it lasts: it is a bee that roves through all these flowers in the garden of God's word. But as it is saving and justifying, it settles upon the promise or offer of Christ in the gospel. And,

(1.) The testimony of the word, concerning Christ's ability to save, is a special object of faith in this case, Mark 9:33. 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.' Sin is a dead weight, which the soul findeth itself unable utterly to hoist up; but the gospel holds out Christ to be able to remove it, Heb. 7:25. 'He is able to save unto the uttermost.' Faith assents to this too, Ps. 65:3. 'Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.'

This assent in both cases may be mixed with doubting, yet true, Mark 9:24. 'I believe; help thou mine unbelief.' If the soul have as much faith of both, as to venture itself on Christ, though the bride sign the contract with a trembling heart, though the doubting will never be commended, the subscription will be sustained.

2. The personal object of faith is,

(1.) General: God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as we profess in the creed, John 14:1. 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.'

(2.) Special; Jesus Christ, as in the text. He is the object of faith, as it saves and justifies the sinner, typified by the brazen serpent in the wilderness, to which the wounded Israelites were to look, and the look was healing, John 3:14, 15. And Christ's person is the primary

object of justifying faith, Isa. 45:22. 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.' And his benefits, merits, righteousness, &c. are the secondary objects thereof, Phil. 3:8, 9. 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.'

V. I proceed to consider the saving and justifying acts of faith. These are,

1. Receiving him as he is offered in the gospel, as in the text; cordially closing with him, and heartily consenting to take him as he is offered. Hereby the spiritual marriage-tie betwixt Christ and the soul is made. Christ gives his consent in the gospel offer, and the sinner gives his by faith closing with the offer. Now, he is offered in the gospel in all his offices. So faith is a receiving of Christ,

(1.) As a Prophet to be our Teacher, Guide, and Leader, renouncing our own wisdom, Matth. 17:5.

(2.) As a Priest, renouncing all merit and confidence in one's self, duties, and sufferings, and betaking one's self to Christ, his obedience and death, for all, Isa. 45:24. 'Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.'

(3.) As a King, renouncing all strange lords, and receiving him for absolute Governor in the soul, and over the whole man, yielding to bear the yoke of his commands, and the yoke of his cross. Isa. 26:13. 'O Lord our God, (says the church), other lords besides thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.'

2. Resting on him as he is offered in all his offices too, Isa. 26:3, 4. 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee:

because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.' 2 Chron. 16:8. 'Thou didst rely on the Lord.' The soul has a burden of weakness and ignorance, and therefore rests on him as a Prophet; I a burden of guilt, but rests on him as a Priest, laying the weight on his blood; a burden of strong lusts and temptations, but rests on him as a King.

This receiving and resting has a most special eye to the priestly office of Christ, faith in his blood. It is a looking to him as lifted up on the cross, Isa. 45:22; eating of his flesh, and drinking of his blood, John 6:53; and submitting to his righteousness, Rom. 10:3.* This receiving and resting upon Christ for salvation is in many places called believing in, or trusting on, Christ as our Saviour.†

VI. I am to shew, what is the end of these acts of faith. It is for salvation, Christ's whole salvation. (1.) Salvation from sin, Matth. 1:21. 'He shall save his people from their sins.' (2.) From wrath, 1 Thess. 1 ult. 'Which delivereth us from the wrath to come;' from the guilt, defilement, dominion, and indwelling of sin. So it is for justification and sanctification. And faith receives and rests on him alone for all these, Gal. 2:16. 'Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ; that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.' So it is a going out of one's self to Christ for all.

VII. I come now to consider the ground and warrant of faith. This is the gospel-offer, (1.) The sinner has his invitation, Isa. 55:1. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat, yea come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.' (2.) The declaration of God's good pleasure in their so doing, John 6:29. 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' And, lastly, his peremptory command, 1 John 3:23. 'And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.'

I shall conclude with a very few inferences.

Inf. 1. Faith is a precious thing, 2 Pet. 1:1. Not to be sworn by, but sought of the Lord. It saves the precious soul, and wraps it up in precious promises.

2. It is a most necessary grace; for it is that which brings Christ and the soul together. And without it, it is impossible to please God, Heb. 11:6.

3. It is of perpetual use while here; it is an eye, hand, and foot to the soul, Psal. 27:3; and at death it does the last office to the man, supports him when all other comforts fail, Heb. 11:13.

4. Lastly, Seek faith to have it wrought, actuated, and strengthened in you; and for that cause, diligently attend ordinances, the preaching of the word particularly; for 'faith cometh by hearing.' Rom. 10:17.

OF REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE

ACTS 11:18.—Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

REPENTANCE is an inseparable companion of faith, so that the soul blessed with faith in Christ will be also endowed with repentance towards God.

This is a conclusion drawn by the believing Jews from the account Peter had given them of what passed with respect to his receiving the Gentiles into Christian fellowship, with which they rest satisfied, namely, That God had given repentance to the Gentiles. Where consider,

1. A blessing granted; repentance unto life; so called, to distinguish it from legal repentance, and the sorrow that is unto death. This true repentance is unto life; for, by God's appointment, it must go before eternal life; and whoso have it shall be sure of that.

2. The parties to whom it was granted; the Gentiles, those who were once without hope and without God in the world.

3. The author of it, God. It is his gift, as well as faith is. He works it in the heart.

The doctrine of the text is,

DOCT. 'To those whom God designs for life, he gives repentance unto life. They come all through this strait gate who enter into life.' Or, 'Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience.' Here I shall show,

I. What are the kinds of repentance.

II. The general nature of repentance unto life.

III. Who is the author of this repentance.

IV. The springs of it.

V. The parts thereof.

VI. Deduce an inference or two for application.

I am to shew, what are the kinds of repentance. They are two.

1. Legal repentance, such as was in Judas, and may he in other reprobates, and so is not saving, Matth. 27:3 being produced by law terrors, without gospel-grace changing the heart.

2. Evangelical repentance, peculiar to the elect, which is that in the text, and is the only true and saving repentance, of which we speak. The general difference betwixt them lies here, that in this last, one repents of his sin as it is sin, or offensive to God, as David did, Psal. 51:4 saying, 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight;' in the other, only as it brings wrath on him, Gen. 4:13.

II. I proceed to shew, the general nature of repentance unto life. It is a saving grace, 2 Tim. 3:2–5. disposing the soul unto all the acts of turning from sin unto God.

1. It is not a transient action, a sigh for sin, a pang of sorrow for it, which goes away again; but it is an abiding grace, a new frame and disposition, fixed in the heart, disposing one to turn from sin to God on all occasions, Zech. 12:10. 'I will pour upon' the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.'

2. Nor yet a passing work of the first days of one's religion; but a grace in the heart, setting one to an answerable working all their days. The heart being smitten with repentance at conversion, the wound is never bound up to bleed no more, till the band of glory be put about it.

3. It is not a common grace, as legal repentance is, but a saving one; distinguishing one from a hypocrite, and having a necessary connexion with eternal life.

III. I shall shew, who is the author of this repentance.

1. Not men themselves; it is not owing to one's natural powers, Jer. 22:23. 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.' The stony heart is beyond man's power to remove.

2. It is God's free gift, and wrought by the power of his Spirit in the heart, Ezek. 36:26, 27. 'A new heart also will I give 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. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them,' Jer. 31:18, 19. 'I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.' Sometimes notorious sinners become penitents, as Manasseh, Paul, &c. Where he is the matter, the knottiest timber is as easy for the Spirit to work as any other, Zech. 12:10 forecited.

The means the Spirit makes use of is the word; hence we read of preaching repentance. And (1.) The law serves to break the hard heart, Jer. 23:29. ('Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?') It is like the Baptist preparing the way for the Messiah's coming. Hence it is called 'The Spirit of bondage,' Rom. 8:15. (2.) The gospel serves to melt the hard heart, like a fire, Jer. 23:29 forecited; and so bow and bend it from sin unto God. The soul is driven by the law, but drawn by the gospel. The Lord comes in the still small voice.

IV. I proceed to show, the springs of this repentance. There are two opened in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

1. A true sense of sin. And in this there are two things.

(1.) A sight of it, Psal. 51:3. 'My sin is ever before me.' The man's eyes are opened, and he sees his sinfulness of nature, heart, lip, and life; the evil of his sin, in the misery and danger of it to himself, and the dishonour it does to God.

(1.) A painful feeling of it, Acts 2:37. The sin which sat light on them before, becomes a burden which they are not able to bear; for now they are roused out of their lethargy and feel their sores: it is a burden on their spirits, backs, and heads. They are filled with terror, anguish, and remorse, at the sight, as was the Philippian jailor, 16:30. This is necessary for repentance, because otherwise the sinner will never part with his sin, nor prize Christ and his grace, Rev. 3:17. He will reign as king without Christ, till he feel his lost estate, as did the prodigal, Luke 15.

2. An apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, Joel 2:12, 13. 'Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.' The eye of faith is opened to see and believe, that there is forgiveness and mercy to a poor sinner, that though the sinner has destroyed himself, yet in God is his help; there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. This can only be apprehended aright through Jesus Christ, Zech. 12:10 forecited. Not mercy for mercy's sake, but Christ's sake: 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,' &c. This is necessary. For without it, one will either, (1.) Go on in secret despair, casting off the thoughts of his case, and making the best of it he can, Jer. 2:25. 'Thou saidst There is no hope. No: for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.' Or, (2.) Lie down in tormenting despair, like Judas. Both which will fix sin in the heart, and bar out repentance. And since God is a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity, and without satisfaction there can be no remission, there is no apprehending of mercy but through Christ.

V. I proceed to shew, the parts of repentance. These are two, humiliation and conversion, Joel 2:12, 13 above quoted.

1. Humiliation. The sinner goes from God by the high-way of pride and self-conceit; but always comes back the low way of humiliation. Grace pulls him down from the seat of the scorner, and lays him at

the Lord's feet, 1 Pet. 5:6. 'Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.' It makes him like Benhadad's servants, who came to the king of Israel girded with sackcloth, and ropes on their heads, in the most humiliating posture. In it there is,

(1.) Sorrow for sin, a kindly sorrow for the offence and dishonour done to a holy gracious God, Zech. 12:10 formerly cited, defacing his image, transgressing his law, grieving his Spirit, and furnishing spear and nails to pierce a Saviour.

(2.) Shame, a holy shame for sin, Rom. 6:21. 'What fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?' They see now their spiritual nakedness, pollution, disappointed expectations from sin, and reproach discovered, which fill the soul with blushing.

(3.) Self-loathing, Ezek. 36:31. 'Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations.' They see a fulness of sin in them, and the complicated aggravations of their sin, which make them to smite on their breast, as the publican did, Luke 18:13 as deserving to be pierced through the heart it bred in; to smite on the thigh, as Ephraim did, Jer. 31:19 as if he desired to break the legs that carried him out of God's way.

(4.) Penitent confession, Jer. 3:13 accusing and condemning themselves.

2. Conversion, or returning. Of which there are two parts.

1st, Turning away from sin, 2 Tim. 2:19. To repent of sin, and continue in the habitual practice of it, is a contradiction. They turn from it,

(1.) In heart, by a hearty and sincere hatred of it. Psal. 119:104. 'I hate every false way.' They hate it as an evil, the worst of evils, worse than sufferings. They hate it sincerely as sin, universally and

irreconcilably. They look on it as God does, as that abominable thing which he hates.

(2.) In their life and conversation; they get clean hands.

[1.] They turn from the gross pollutions of the outward man, in the habitual practice of these, Psal. 24:3, 4. 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.' A profane life is the mark of an impenitent state, Gal. 5:21. 'They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' The true godly may make gross slips; but if they be habitually gross in their lives, there is no difference betwixt Christ's sheep and the devil's goats. [2.] They are tender with respect to sins of common infirmity, making conscience of words and action, as Paul did, Acts 24:16. 'Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.' What others count light, they will count great: even these as burdens to them, which they groan under, and as iron fetters they would fain be freed of, Rom. 7:24. 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

2dly, Turning to God. By faith man returns to God as a portion, by repentance as a Lord and Master, like a runaway servant. And he returns,

(1.) To God himself. Sinners departing from God, dislike not only their service, but their Master, Luke 19:14. But returning they are disposed to love him and like him as a Master.

(2.) To his duty to God, Acts 9:6 to the practice of every known duty, and spirituality in duty. This is new obedience, which a penitent turns to, [1.] In full purpose, Psal. 119:106 no more doubting whether to fall in with it or not, or delaying or putting it off any more. [2.] In sincere endeavours, Acts 24:6.*

Inf. 1. An impenitent heart is a sad sign of a lost state, Rom. 2:5. While thou livest so, thou art far from God; and if thou die so, thou art lost for ever.

2. That repentance which is not evangelical and true is little worth. You must have more than Judah's repentance, if ever you see heaven.

3. To pretend to repentance, and never forsake sin, is vain.

4. To leave sin, and not take up the contrary duties, is not repentance.

5. Go to the Lord by faith for the grace of repentance.

OF CHRIST'S ORDINANCES IN GENERAL

ISA. 12:3.—Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

THIS song looks to the days of the gospel, wherein Christ having come and purchased salvation, the tidings of it are carried through the world in the gospel, and it is communicated to Jews and Gentiles through the means of grace. Here we have,

1. A benefit to be had in the church, water, i. e. gospel grace, the benefits of Christ's redemption, as suitable to needy, fainting souls, as water to the thirsty. See John 4:14 and 7:37.

2. The way of its communication to poor sinners. It is to be drawn out of the wells of salvation. These are gospel-ordinances, the wells in this valley of Baca for the life of souls, and refreshment of spiritual travellers. All the elect capable to draw, do draw out of them. This is the sense, whether the allusion be to the wells in the wilderness for

the Israelites, or to the Jews fetching water out of the spring of Siloam at the feast of tabernacles in the night, with mirth and music, to the temple, and pouring it on the altar.

The text furnishes this doctrine.

DOCT. 'The Lord's ordinances are the wells of salvation to the elect.' Or, 'The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are, his ordinances, especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.'

Here I shall shew,

I. What is understood by a means of salvation.

II. What are these means of salvation.

III. What makes any ordinance a mean of grace.

IV. To whom are the Lord's ordinances made effectual.

V. Whence their efficacy proceeds.

VI. Deduce an inference or two.

I. I am to shew, what is understood by a means of salvation. It is that by and through which the Lord Jesus doth by his Spirit convey grace and salvation into a soul. That is a mean or mids betwixt the Lord and the soul, which he uses for communication of grace from himself to the soul, 1 Cor. 1:21. 'For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' Chap. 3:5. 'Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?' The which may be used with expectation of good thereby. These means are some of them outward, some inward; some ordinary, others extraordinary.

II. I come now to shew, what these means of salvation are.

1. The inward means is faith, Heb. 4:2. 'Unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.' This ordinarily requires an outward means to work it by. But being wrought, it is the great inward means of communication betwixt Christ and the soul. This is the mean of entering us into the covenant, of repentance, justification, reconciliation, sanctification, &c. It is the bucket whereby one draws the water out of the wells of salvation; and the want of it in most that come to them, makes them go away without water.

2. Extraordinary means are whatsoever the Lord in his sovereign wisdom is pleased to make use of extraordinarily for conveying grace into the hearts of his elect, as he did a voice from heaven for the conversion of Paul, Acts 9:4, 5. None can limit sovereignty. He may use what means he will, and bring about his purposes of grace by means unknown to us. What means the Lord makes use of in the case of elect idiots, such as are deaf or blind, and so incapable of reading or hearing the word, and yet may get grace and be saved, who can determine? Or perhaps he does it without means altogether. But,

3. The outward and ordinary means are the Lord's own ordinances, Rom. 10:14, 15. 'How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!' They are called outward, because they are something without ourselves; ordinary, because though ordinarily the Lord makes use of them for these holy ends, yet he has not tied himself to them, but may work without them, as seems good in his sight, Acts 9:4, 5. Now these are,

1st, In the general, all the ordinances of God without exception, which he has set up in his church for that end, namely, the word, sacraments, prayer, church-communion or fellowship, Acts 2:42; which being managed by mutual instruction, admonition, consolation, and watching over one another, are of great use to promote the salvation of souls; church-government, discipline, and censures, Matth. 18:17: religious fasting, 1 Cor. 7:5; singing of psalms, Eph. 5:19; swearing by the name of God, when duly called thereto, Deut. 6:13; and whatsoever are God's institutions in his church.

2dly, The most special means of grace and salvation are the first three, the word, sacraments, and prayer, Acts 2:42.

(1.) The word preached or read. This has been a well of salvation to many, and a means of grace, Acts 2:41. About three thousand souls together drank of this well, and lived. It is the seed which the new creature is formed of; and though a despised ordinance, yet the great means of God's appointment for bringing sinners into a state of grace, 1 Cor. 1:21 forecited.

(2.) The sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper. In both, the people of God have drank to the salvation of their souls, though they are not converting ordinances, but sealing ones, supposing the efficacy of the word to precede; as is evident in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:39. 1 Cor. 10:16.

(3.) Prayer, public, private, and secret. This is a very special means of grace, and a most ordinary way of communion betwixt Christ and a soul. So that one no sooner grows concerned about his soul, but he uses this means, as Saul did, of whom it is said, Acts 9:11. 'Behold, he prayeth.' It is a means by which divine influences have flowed plentifully to many a soul, and none of the Lord's people can live without it.

III. I shall now shew, what makes any ordinance a mean of grace, a well of salvation, out of which one may in faith look to draw water for his soul, or get spiritual good by. The Papists and church of England think human institution sufficient, else they had never made so many significant ceremonies and actions in religion, for which there is no divine warrant, as crossing in baptism, kissing the book in swearing, &c. In the use of which they think one has ground to expect good to his soul; but all these, being but human ordinances and inventions of men, are not means of grace, but of sinning; not wells of salvation, but broken cisterns, that can hold no water; nay, they are rather puddles, that defile the soul, instead of nourishing it. For,

1. No ordinance whatsoever can avail without a particular blessing; for the efficacy of ordinances is not natural, or from themselves. Now, men cannot annex a blessing to their ordinances and institutions, to make them effectual for the good of souls, though both church and state join for it. And we have no ground to expect the Spirit's working with tools that are not of his own making. Therefore their institution is vain, and their use too, Matth. 15:9. 'In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.'

2. Men's institutions or ordinances, in respect of God, are forbidden, and condemned by the Lord's word, namely, in the second commandment. The want of a divine warrant is sufficient to condemn any thing of this sort, if it be never so likely in the eyes of human wisdom, Matth. 15:9 just quoted. See Jer. 32:35. 'And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination to cause Judah to sin.' And they must needs be blasted institutions, since the institution is an invading of Christ's royal prerogative, Matth. 28:20; who has directed his servants to teach his people to 'observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded.'

3. Men's use of them is not only useless, but worse, not only to no good purpose, but to ill purpose; for the using of them is will-worship, which is sinning against the Lord, Col. 2:20–23. 'Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not, taste not, handle not: which are all to perish with the using), after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will-worship and humility, and neglecting the body, not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.' It provokes God, and brings on wrath on the users of them, Hos. 5:11, 12. 'Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment; because he willingly walked after the commandment. Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth: and to the house of Judah as rottenness.'

That which makes any ordinance a means of grace or salvation, what one may justly look for good of to his soul, is divine institution only, Matth. 28:20 forecited: therefore the first question in all ordinances ought to be, 'Whose is this image and superscription?' That appointment is to be found in the Lord's word, Isa. 8:20. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' That is 'sufficient to make the man of God perfect,' 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; and therefore contains the whole ordinances he is to meddle with for the salvation of himself or others. The institution of some ordinances is more clear in the word than others; but whatever ordinance has divine warrant, express or by good consequence, is a divine ordinance and means of grace. And to these his own ordinances the Lord has confined us, Deut. 4:2. 'Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.'

IV. I proceed to consider, to whom, the Lord's ordinances are made effectual.

1. Not to all who partake of them, Isa. 53:1. 'Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' Many come to

these wells who never taste of the water. I think it an unwarrantable expression, that all God's ordinances do attain their end, in the salvation or damnation of all that come under them; for damnation is not the end of any of God's ordinances, but salvation. And the scriptures adduced to prove it, viz. Isa. 55:10, 11. 'For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it;' 2 Cor. 2:15, 16. 'For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are the savour of death unto death; to the other the savour of life unto life: and who is sufficient for these things?' will not prove it; for the former respects only God's end in sending his word, the other the event, but neither of them the end of the ordinance. Damnation is the effect or consequence of the contempt or misimprovement of ordinances, but by no means the end thereof.

2. But to all the elect they are effectual, unto whom they come, Acts 13:48. 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' John 10:26. 'Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.' To the elect only they are effectual for their salvation, which is their end.

V. I am to shew, whence the efficacy of ordinances proceeds. It does not proceed from any virtue in themselves, or in him that administers them, but from the Spirit of the Lord working in them and by them, 1 Cor. 3:7. But this I shall speak to more largely in a posterior discourse.

I conclude with a few inferences.

Inf. 1. Sad is the case of those who are in such a wilderness, as there are no wells in, nor any of God's ordinances. 'Where no vision is, the people perish.' This is the dismal case of the Pagan world. Which

should move us to pray that the Lord may send the light of the gospel to these dark places of the earth.

2. The filling up of the wells in a land, by removing ordinances from a people, is a sad stroke. Where the word and sacraments are not, there is no church there; and consequently God has no people to save there. O let us cry to the Lord, that this may never be our unhappy case.

3. The defiling of the wells is a sad matter for those who drink of them, whether it be by error in doctrine, superstition in worship, or uninstituted government of the church: but worst of all, where they are poisoned with damnable heresies and idolatry, as in the apostate church of Rome. Let us pray for, and strive to maintain, purity of doctrine, worship, and government.

4. Heinous is the sin of the neglect or contempt of the wells of salvation, which God has opened unto them. Let despisers and neglecters of ordinances consider this, and what they will answer when God rises up to call them to an account. Alas! this is one of the great grounds of the Lord's controversy with the present generation, which loudly calls to deep humiliation before him.

5. Great is the sin and loss of those who come to the wells, but never draw of the water nor taste it: who are never bettered by ordinances, but remain as dead and unconcerned about their souls as if the means of salvation were not vouchsafed to them.

6. Lastly, Prize the ordinances. Prepare for them, and duly improve them; remember they are the ordinary means of salvation: therefore seek to enjoy God, and to have communion with him, in them, otherwise they will be in vain as to you.

HOW THE WORD IS MADE EFFECTUAL TO SALVATION

EPH. 6:17.—The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

IN these words we have, (1.) A particular piece of the Christian armour recommended, the word of God, the revelation of his mind communicated to us in the scriptures, with which every one who minds for heaven should be familiarly acquainted. (2.) A particular piece of its commendation; it is the sword of the Spirit; i. e. it is that which the Spirit of the Lord uses in fighting the battles of the Lord, and conquering an elect world to Christ, and bringing them, through all opposition from the devil, the world, and the flesh, into the heavenly Canaan. And therefore it cannot but be of singular use to a Christian in the spiritual warfare. It is but the sword, but the Spirit cuts with it.

The doctrine of the text is,

DOCT. 'The word of God is the sword the Spirit makes use of for raising up a kingdom to Christ.' This more fully in the words of the Catechism, runs thus: 'The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation.'

In handling this subject, I shall shew,

I. In what respects the word is an ordinance of God, and mean of salvation.

II. What are the ends for which the Lord has appointed these means and ordinances of reading and preaching the word.

III. Consider the efficacy of the word.

IV. Improve the subject in some inferences.

I. I am to shew, in what respects the word is an ordinance of God and mean of salvation.

First, The reading of the word is an ordinance of God, and mean, of salvation, of God's own appointment. The Bible is this word, and God has given it to us, and appointed it to be read.

1. The public reading of it in the congregation is God's ordinance, and a mean of salvation. And we find it in scripture performed by the teachers of the people, Neh. 8:8; 'So they read in the book, in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.' Ver. 2, 3. 'And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that is before the water-gate, from the morning until mid-day, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law.' And so the reading of the word claims a place among public ordinances. Hence reading and expounding a passage of scripture every Lord's day in the church, is a laudable and well-warranted practice in this church.

2. The private reading of it in families, Deut. 6:6, 7, 8, 9; 'These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates,' Psal. 78:5; 'For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children.' Every family ought to be a church; and as they are to speak to God by prayer, so they are to hear God speak to them, by reading

his word. And this they ought to do every morning and evening, as well as command their children and servants to read it by themselves.

3. Secret reading of it by one's self, Deut. 17:19; 'It [the law or word of God] shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life,' John 5:39; 'Search the scriptures.' By this means the soul converses with God in his word. And those who do not make a practice of daily reading the scripture, are none of the Lord's people, whatever otherwise they may profess.

Hence it is evident, that the people not only may, but ought to read the Bible, and therefore it ought to be translated into the vulgar languages. Which highly condemns the Antichristian church of Rome, which takes away the key of knowledge from the people, by prohibiting them to read the word of God.

Secondly, The preaching of the word is an ordinance of God, and mean of grace, 1 Cor. 1:21; 'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' But though all may read the word, yet none ought to preach it, but those who, being qualified for it, are duly called thereto, 2 Cor. 3:6; 'Who hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit, Rom. 10:15; 'How shall they preach except they be sent?' 1 Tim. 4:14; 'Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.' Though the reading of the word, as well as the preaching, is a mean of salvation, yet the preaching of it is the special means, though a despised ordinance in the world; therefore called foolishness, 1 Cor. 1:21. It is the most ancient of the two. Noah was a preacher, before the Bible was to take his text from, 2 Pet. 2:5; and so was Enoch before him, Jude. 14. In this work Christ himself spent the time of his making public appearance in the world, viz. preaching the kingdom of God. It is the mercy of the church of God, that they have the word of God as a lamp always burning: but the preaching of it is the snuffing of the lamp, by which it gives the greater light. And for this

reason the preaching of the word should be attended to by all, if ever they expect to be saved.

II. I proceed to shew what are the ends for which the Lord has appointed these means and ordinances of reading and preaching the word.

First, For sinners out of Christ they are appointed means of two great and necessary purposes.

1. Of their conviction, 1 Cor. 14:24, 25. 'But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.' The sinner naturally is asleep in sin, and the word awakens him; he is bold and daring, and will not consider his sin, nor duty either; but the word brings him to the bar, judges him, convicts him, and condemns him. And,

(1.) It discovers his sin to him. [1.] What are his sins. It comes home so close to him, as if it said, 'Thou art the man.' It goes out through and in through him, and opens up his very heart, tells him of himself what none in the world were privy to, but only God and his own conscience, 1 Cor. 4:2–5. This is what the spouse means by the watchmen's finding her,' Cant. 3:3. Who has told the minister? say many, when the minister drawing his bow at a venture knows not whom it hits, till the party touched cries out, but I the minister directs the arrow, Heb. 4:12. And many a time have we seen the reproof laid in seasonably for the sin, that one could not miss it, if but going on straight in the ordinary.

[2.] What the heinous nature of sin is, Heb. 4:12. God's word pulls off the paint and varnishing from the man's sin, and discovers it in its loathsome nature, and killing aggravations. It makes him see the evil in it, that he never saw before, Acts 26:18.

(2.) It discovers his misery out of Christ, Acts 2:37. The sinner sees in the word, as in a glass, his lost state without a Saviour; perceives himself bound over to death with cords of guilt, which fills him with fear, terror, anxiety, and remorse.

2. Of their conversion, Psal. 19:7; 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' The word is the means which God hath chosen for bringing sinners to himself, Acts 26:18; for raising the dead soul to life, for regeneration, and the working of faith and repentance. This effect of the word we take up in these two particulars.

(1.) The word is the mean of driving the sinner out of himself to Jesus Christ by faith, as it did Peter's hearers, Acts 2:37, 38; 'Faith cometh by hearing.' The law goes before and condemns the sinner, and discovers him a lost man. The gospel follows with the glad tidings of salvation, and the soul is persuaded to embrace them.

(2.) It is the mean of driving the sinner out of his sins unto God, Acts 20:21; it sets fire to his nest in sin, and brings him to the Lord as a Master, and to a compliance with his will as his duty.

Secondly, For saints they are means appointed for their edification or building up, Acts 20:32. The church of Christ in this world is but a building, and not yet finished; and every particular saint's state in this world is but an unfinished building: and therefore they must have the word continued with them, as the scaffolding is with the house till it get on the topstone, Eph. 4:11–13. And the reading and preaching of the word are;

1. Means of building them up in holiness, the foundation of which is laid in them at conversion, Acts 20:32. As they are born again of the incorruptible seed of the word, so they are nourished by these breasts; by the same means they had their spiritual life, they get it more abundantly, 1 Pet. 2:2. It does so by,

(1.) Establishing them in the good they have attained, setting them to hold it fast over the belly of temptations, Eph. 4:14. By the reading

and preaching of the word, the truth according to godliness is rivetted in them, that the longer they live under the means, they are more confirmed in the Lord's way.

(2.) Cleansing them from remaining evils in their heart and life, Psal. 19:9. Coming to this glass, they get their spots discovered to them, that they may wipe them off. So the word is the pruning-hook of the great Husbandman, John 15:2, 3; and the engine for demolishing the remaining strong holds of the rebels, 2 Cor. 10:4, 5.

(3.) Pressing and helping them forward to the good thing lacking, 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; and so the effect is, that they 'all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord,' 2 Cor. 3:18. It helps them still to add a cubit to their stature, shewing them more of the truth and the duties of holiness.

2. A means of building them up in comfort, Rom. 15:4. They are liable to many griefs in the world; but it is appointed to be their great cordial, and sovereign remedy against all their griefs. And this it does, (1.) By setting their case in a true light, Psal. 73:17. (2.) By affording suitable remedies for their case, from the precious promises and doctrines of it suited to every case, Isa. 40:1, 2. 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.'

III. I shall consider the efficacy of the word. Concerning which observe,

1. The parties to whom it is effectual. Its convincing efficacy it may have on the reprobate, as Felix, Acts 24:25. Its converting efficacy it has on the elect only, Acts 13:48. 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' Its edifying efficacy, both in holiness and comfort, it has on the saints.

2. The spring of its efficacy is not from itself, nor the preacher, but from the Spirit's operation by and with it, 1 Cor. 3:5, 6. 'Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered: but God gave the increase.

3. The inward mean which the Spirit makes use of to render it efficacious, is the faith or belief of it, resting upon God's faithful word for the efficacy, Heb. 4:2.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

Inf. 1. Prize your Bibles, and read them diligently in your families, and by yourselves, and look on that exercise as a mean appointed of God for your souls' good, John 5:39. 'Search the scriptures.' Alas! the dust of many people's Bibles will be a heavy witness against them at the great day: which should excite us all to the careful perusal of them.

2. Prize the preaching of the word, and attend it conscientiously; and remember that the neglecting and deserting it is not such a light thing as many look on it to be; since it is the spiritual means which the Lord makes use of in converting sinners, and edifying saints; and is necessarily productive of the most terrible consequences to those who condemn it.

3. Let not the one jostle out the other. God has joined them; do not ye then put them asunder. Think not that because ye hear the preaching, therefore ye may neglect reading the Bible; nor to sit at home without necessity on the Lord's day, thinking to do as well with your Bibles, as attending the dispensation of the word. For as the preaching sends you to your Bible, your Bible would send you to the preaching, if ye would hearken to it, 1 Cor. 1:21. And the Bible is read in vain, if it do not inspire you with a sincere love to the preaching of the word.

4. The word is necessary, for saints as well as sinners. It is false growth by which people grow beyond it, either in preaching or reading, before they get to heaven. Nay, all such growth and progress is an arrant delusion.

5. Lastly, Look to the Lord himself for the efficacy of the word; and labour to believe the word, that it may profit your souls. For without faith the word will be unprofitable to you; and without the influence of the Spirit, ye will reap no benefit by it.

HOW THE WORD IS TO BE READ AND HEARD

LUKE 8:18.—Take heed therefore how ye hear.

THIS is an admonition inferred by our Lord from the parable of the sower in the preceding part of the chapter, in which he had shewn the very different events of people's hearing the word. To some it is effectual, to more it is not: Take heed therefore how ye hear, says he. Much depends on the right manner of hearing the word; and the case is the same as to the reading of it, for therein we are to hear God speak by his word. Men may hear what is very good, yet get no good by it, unless they hear in the due manner.

The doctrine of the text is,

DOCT. 'As the hearers of the word would profit by it, they should take heed how they hear it.'

Here I shall consider that one point, How we should hear? or 'How the word is to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation?' Ans. 'That the word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer;

receive it with faith and love; lay it up in our hearts; and practise it in our lives.'

There are three things necessary to be heeded and practised, if we would so manage these ordinances, as they may become effectual for our salvation.

I. Some things are to go before hearing.

II. Some things are to go along with it.

III. Some things are to follow after it.

I. Some things are to go before hearing; namely, preparation and prayer.

First, Preparation. We should prepare ourselves for the ordinances, as Jacob said, Gen. 35:2, 3. 'Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments. And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.' It is true, God may by his sovereign grace catch the unprepared heart by his word, as he says, Is. 65:1. 'I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not;' and there are not wanting instances of such a surprising dispensation of grace. But it is the way of preparation in which we have ground to look for good by it, Is. 64:5. 'Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways;' otherwise we are not in the way of getting good by it.

This preparation lies in these five things.

1. Getting the heart impressed with an awful sense of the majesty and holiness of that God into whose presence we are going, and whose word we are to hear, Psal. 89:6. Though the voice is on earth, the speaker is in heaven, and we should consider it so as to come to hear

what God says to us, Acts. 10:33. And the more this be on our spirits, we may expect the more good by the word, Isa. 66:2.

2. Banishing out of the heart worldly cares that are lawful at other times, Matth. 13:7. We should say to all these as Abraham did to his young men, 'Abide ye here,—and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, Gen. 22:5. The heart going after the world at such a time, renders the word ineffectual: but a contrary disposition is a token for good.

3. Application of the blood of Christ to the soul for removing guilt, and doing away any controversy betwixt God and the soul, Amos 3:3. 'How can two walk together, except they be agreed?' Psal. 26:6. 'I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.' The laver stood before the entrance into the temple, that they might wash there who were to go in: so spiritually, 'before the throne there is a sea of glass like unto crystal,' in which filthy polluted souls are to wash, ere they be admitted to the throne, Rev. 4:6. And happy they who come thus washed to hear the word; for they may expect to hold communion with Christ therein.

4. Purging the heart of carnal and corrupt lusts and affections, 1 Pet. 2:1, 2. This is to put off one's shoes when coming on the holy ground, laying by the earthly frame, and putting on a heavenly one. For what good effect can be expected on the heart, filled with corrupt lusts, passions, and prejudices, nourished and not striven against; surely none at all. Whereas, if the heart be purged from these, the happiest effects may be looked for. It is impossible to profit by the word, where the heart is full of vain and carnal thoughts and projects.

5. Lastly, Stirring up in the heart spiritual desires, 1 Pet. 2:2. 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby, longing for communion with God, seeing his glory in the sanctuary, the supply of soul wants, and particularly for something suitable to our case. And therefore a deep consideration of our own

case is a necessary part of preparation, 1 Kings 8:38 and, if properly attended to, would be attended with great blessings.

This preparation for the ordinances is necessary, considering two things especially. (1.) The greatness of him with whom we have to do, Heb. 12:28, 29. 'Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire. One would not rush without consideration into the presence of his prince: why then should one rush thoughtlessly into the presence of his God? (2.) The weight of the work. To hear God's mind declared to us is a business of the greatest importance; eternity depends on it to us; life and death hang upon our improving or not improving it, 2 Cor. 2:16. 'To the one (says the apostle) we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.' And were this duly considered, it would stir us all up to the most diligent preparation.

Secondly, Prayer. We should be much in prayer before we go to ordinances, family prayer and secret prayer, and therefore ought not to spend the Lord's day morning so as not to have time for these. If ye would have good of the word read or preached, pray, and pray earnestly before it; Pray,

1. For assistance to the minister. Hence the apostle says, 'Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified,' 2 Thess. 3:1. Pray that the Lord himself would come out with him, directing him, instructing him, and exciting him, what to speak, and how to speak. It is rare to see a lively people under a dead ministry; and therefore people's own interest should engage them in concern for ministers.

2. For a meal to yourselves, Psal. 119:18. 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law.' Pray that God would direct the word to your case, and send it home on your hearts with his blessing, that ye may be enlightened, sanctified, strengthened,

humbled, or raised up by it, as your case requires. And in order to attain this, pray and wrestle earnestly,

3. For an outpouring of the Spirit in his own ordinances, agreeably to the Lord's own promises, Prov. 1:23. 'Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you; that yourselves and others may be bettered by the word.' Every one should be concerned for the success of the gospel, not to themselves only, but to others also. Love to God and our neighbours' souls should engage to this, 2 Thess. 3:1 above cited.

Now, both this preparation and prayer beforehand being done, beware ye lean not on them, but remember that all depends on the Spirit's influences, and that he is debtor to none, Cant. 4:16. 'Awake, O north wind, and come thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.' John 3:8. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth.' Cry therefore that the Spirit may render the word effectual.

II. Some things are to go along with hearing.

First, Attending unto the word diligently. This implies,

1. Waiting diligently upon the ordinances, so as people make it their business to catch opportunities of the word, and let none slip which Providence will allow them to overtake. That they hang on about the Lord's hands in the galleries of ordinances, labouring to keep the tryst which God makes with sinners there, 1 Tim. 4:13. They that are only chance-customers to ordinances, whose attendance is ruled by their own conveniences, without conscience of duty, causing them to take them only now and then as their fancy takes them, cannot expect good of them. 'Blessed is the man (says the personal Wisdom of God) that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors,' Prov. 8:34.

3. Diligent attention to the word, Isa. 55:2. 'Hearken diligently unto me;' listening carefully to it, as a matter of the greatest weight, keeping the mind off other things in the time, and bending it wholly unto the word. In this there are four things comprehended.

(1.) Outward gravity and composure, without which attention is marred, Luke 4:20. If men do believe it to be God's word which they are hearing, this is as little respect to it, as they can shew, namely, outward gravity; and therefore they are not to lay down their heads and sleep, nor to gaze hither and thither, far less to laugh, or to go out and in, here and there, in the time. This kind of behaviour, is not without contempt of God, who speaks to men by his word.

(2.) A fixing and bending of the ear and mind to what is spoken. Hence is that counsel of the wise man, Prov. 2:1, 2. 'My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding.'—People must take care that they be not wandering in their heart while the Lord's words sound before them. If the heart wander, and be thinking on other things, how can the word do them good, while Satan has thus stolen away the heart?

(3.) A discerning of what they hear, so as to distinguish betwixt truth and error, the corn and the chaff, Mark 4:24. 'Take heed what ye hear:' and therefore to mark always the agreement betwixt what is preached and the written word, for which the Bereans are highly commended, Acts 17:11. For they attend not rightly to the word who do not thus endeavour to discern what they hear.

(4.) An endeavouring to know the mind of God in his word, to hear with understanding. This is to attend not only to the words, but to the things wrapt up in these words; as Lydia did, 'whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul,' Acts 16:14. It is not enough to hear the words, but the message from the Lord is to be weighed and seriously considered, and the mind of God taken up therein.

There is great need of attending unto the word with diligence, and making serious work of it. For,

(1.) The matter in hand is of the greatest weight; it concerns eternity; it is a treaty of peace betwixt God and our souls; the proposal of a method to preserve our souls from ruin, Luke 16:29. 'They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them;' and this proposal is not to be carelessly managed. And God himself is the Speaker; and what he speaks should be diligently attended to, for his sake; to prevent the breaking out of his wrath, which is threatened against those who do not hearken to him.

(2.) Because at best we will have much ado to hear well as we ought. We are naturally dull of hearing the Lord's word, Isa. 58:4, 5. 'They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of the charmer, charming never so wisely.' And oft-times there is a locked door between him and us. Hence he is represented thus, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock,' &c. Rev. 3:20. And there is a thick wall of separation also betwixt him and us, Isa. 59:2. 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.' And there is always much noise about us as long as the tempter is to the fore. Therefore the highest attention is requisite.

3. Lastly, If we do not thus attend, we lose, and our loss is great. Thomas missed one occasion of meeting with Christ, and unbelief got in upon him. And that word which we miss may be the most suitable to our case, which therefore Satan watches to carry off from us. Therefore we should never miss one occasion of hearing the word.

Secondly, Receiving the word rightly. This lies in two things.

1. Receiving it with faith, Heb. 4:2. It is the mouth of the soul, by which one receives the sincere milk of the word, and drinks water out of the wells of salvation, and without which one gets no good of it to his salvation; but it is as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. It must be received,

(1.) With a faith of assent, believing it to be true and right, assenting to the truth and righteousness of the precepts, promises, and threatenings of it, Psal. 119:128, 160. 'I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right. Thy word is true from the beginning.' It has a divine authority; itself is God's testimony, which therefore for itself is to be believed; and where the power of it comes, it captivates the soul into the belief of it, 2 Cor. 10:5. This is to receive the kingdom of God as a little child, Luke 18:17.

(2.) With a faith of application, applying it to ourselves, Job 5 ult. 'Hear it, and know thou it for thy good.' The Lord's word is compared to the falling rain or dew, Deut. 32:2. The soul in receiving it should be as the dry and gaping ground swallowing it up as it falls, Psal. 143:6. 'My soul thirsteth after thee as a thirsty land.' But most people are like the smooth stones, which send it off themselves to those about them. Now, this application is that which makes the plaister stick, and nothing else will do it. If the word be not applied, it can do no more good, than a plaister unapplied can heal the wound.

Now, the word is to be applied by us, for all the ends for which it is appointed, namely, for our conviction, Acts 2:37 our conversion, John 4:45 our edification in holiness, 1 Pet. 2:2 and comfort, Rom. 15:4 for the informing our judgments, and rectifying our will and affections; in short, for all the purposes of our salvation; otherwise we receive it in vain.

2. Receiving it with love, 2 Thess. 2:10. Faith receives the word as true, love receives it as good, and good for us, Isa. 39 ult. 'Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken,' said Hezekiah to the prophet. It is good for us in all the parts of it, for we need them all; the threatenings as well as the promises; its reproofs as well as its consolations. And there is a threefold love which we owe to the word of God.

(1.) A love of esteem, highly prizing it, Job 23:12. 'I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.' Psal. 119:72,

'The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.' (2.) A love of desire after it, 1 Pet. 2:2. 'As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby;' a longing for it. (3.) A love of complacency in it, Psal. 119:162. 'I rejoice at thy word as one that findeth great spoil.'

We owe this love to the word for the author's sake, Psal. 119:159. 'Consider how I love thy precepts;' for its intrinsic excellency, Psal. 119:140. 'Thy word is very pure; therefore doth thy servant love it;' and for the necessity and usefulness of it to us, as 'light that shineth in a dark place,' 2 Pet. 1:19; as our food, Job 23:12 forecited; nay, as our very life and breath. Deut. 32:47.

Thirdly, Laying it up in our hearts, Our hearts and memories are to be storehouses for the word, and there we are to lay it up, as it comes to our hands, Psal. 119:11. 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart, (says the Psalmist), that I might not sin against thee.' How can those expect good of the word who let it go just as it comes? But we should catch hold of it, retain it and not forget it.

We should lay it up as a precious and enriching treasure, Col. 3:16 'Let the word of God dwell in you richly:' As a thing that we are in hazard of losing, and being robbed of, Matth. 13:4; and as what we will have use for afterwards, Isa. 42:23. 'Who will hearken and hear for the time to come?' Suppose it reach not your present case, it may be useful for what will be your case. You are travelling through the wilderness: lay up the word as the traveller does his directions for the way.

The best way to lay it up is, to let it have deep impression on your spirits while you hear it, and to lift up your eyes to the Lord, that he may fix it in your heart, Psal. 119:93. 'I will never forget thy precepts,' 2 Tim. 1:12. 'I know in whom I have believed.'

III. Some things are to follow after hearing the word.

1. Meditation on it in your hearts, Psal. 1:2. The Psalmist thus describes the good man: 'In his law doth he meditate day and night.' This is the harrowing of the seed sown, and the mean to sink it down in the soul, to keep it fast, Luke 9:44. 'Let these sayings sink down into your ears.' This is the way to guard the word, that it may not slip away, Heb. 2:4; and a sovereign help to a leaking memory. Ensure yourselves to meditation on the word, and ye will find your memories surprisingly strengthened: one particular will bring on another, and one truth meditated on will recal another to your remembrance, and afford you vast delight and pleasure.

2. Conferring of it on your discourse. This was enjoined to the Israelites by Moses, Deut. 6:6, 7. 'The words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.' Luke 24:14. 'And they talked together of all those things which had happened.' The repeating over again of the Lord's word, has sometimes had a relish with it, more taking than at its first coming to the man. Hence says the spouse, Can. 2:10. 'My beloved spake and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.' Talking of it thus on your way from the church, and in your own houses, will be most beneficial to you.

3. Lastly, The main thing is practising it in your lives, Luke 8:15. 'That on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience:' wiping off your spots, and adorning yourselves in holiness of life, by the glass of the word, Jam. 1:25. 'Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word,' &c. The word heard, but not practised, will sink men deeper in damnation; but heard and practised too, will bring them into eternal salvation. O then be careful to practise what you hear, otherwise it will do you no good.

I shall conclude with an inference or two.

Inf. 1. No wonder most of the hearers of the gospel get no good of it. They are at no pains to prepare for hearing it, wrestle not in prayer for the Lord's blessing upon it, receive it neither with faith nor love, are not solicitous to lay it up in their hearts, and as little to practise it in their lives. How then can they reap benefit by it, when they use not these commanded means?

2. Here is the way to get good of the word, however little good is done by it this day. Prepare for hearing it; pray earnestly for the blessing of God to accompany it: receive it with faith and love; lay it up in your hearts: and reduce it to practice in your lives.

THE DUTY OF ATTENDING ORDINANCES ENFORCED

ACTS 10:33.—Immediately before I sent to thee: and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

As attendance upon the public ordinances is one of the special means whereby Christ communicates the benefits of redemption to us, I have chosen this text in order to enforce, farther upon you, the duty of a diligent attendance upon them.

Our Lord Jesus, the only King and Head of his church, hath appointed ministers his ambassadors to declare his mind unto his people; and though he could teach his people without them, yet the ministry is his ordinance, and by the foolishness of preaching he saves them that believe. Here we have,

1. A call to Peter related. The person calling is Cornelius, a soldier. A Gentile he was, yet a proselyte: a good man, but one who as yet knew not the doctrine of Christ crucified. The person called was Peter; him God honoured to break the ice for the calling of the Gentiles, and to take down the first stone in the partition wall betwixt Jews and Gentiles. The call itself is in these words, I sent. He had sent three men to invite Peter to his house, ver. 7. The reason of the call is thus expressed, Therefore, because he had the command of God for that effect. He made quick dispatch in the call; it was done immediately after the mind of God was discovered to him.

2. Peter's compliance with the call commended, Thou hast well done that thou art come. It is acceptable to God and to us. Peter had no great inclination to this work; he had his scruples about the lawfulness of it: but God condescends to solve his doubts, and clear

his way. It was very offensive to the Christian Jews, which necessitated him to make an apology for his practice, Acts 11 after all it was well done to come, because he came in obedience to the call of God.

3. An address made to Peter when he was come, by Cornelius the caller, in name of himself and those who were with him. In which take notice, (1.) Of a congregation, though small, yet well convened. What the congregation was, see ver. 24. 'his kinsmen and near friends.' These, with his family, and those that came with Peter, made up the assembly. The good man made it his business to get not only his own family, but his friends, to wait on the ordinances. (2.) An acknowledgment of God's presence in a special manner in religious assemblies, We are all here present before God. (3.) The great end of their meeting was their soul's edification, to heart, that is, to hear and obey. And here is what the minister is to preach and the people to receive; it is what is commanded of God. The minister has a commission from God, and he must preach, not what men would have him to preach, but what God commands; and the people are to receive nothing that is beyond his commission. The extent of both is all things; the minister is to preach, and the people to receive, all things commanded of God.

Obs. 1. When God discovers his mind in any particular to a person or people, it is their duty presently to comply with it without delay. There could be no disputing after the discovery of the Lord's mind, Gal. 1:15–17. The contrary was the fault of Balaam, and of the Jews in Egypt, Jer. 44.

2. It is a blessed thing for a people to call that minister to whom God himself directs and inclines them. It is like Cornelius, who did not so much as know Peter by name, Acts 10:5 but he goes to God, and God directs him.

3. It is a commendable thing in a minister of Christ to comply with the call of God and his people, though it should be offensive to some,

and not very agreeable to his own inclinations. Ministers are to go, not where they will and others would wish them, but where God wills. It was Levi's commendation, 'Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.' Deut. 33:9.

The doctrine arising from the text is,

DOCT. 'It is the duty of a people to attend on the ordinances, to be all present there before God, where pure ordinances are set up among them, to hear all things commanded of God to the minister whom the Lord hath sent them.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Give reasons why people should attend on and be present at ordinances, where God has set them up among them.

II. Shew in what respects people are before the Lord in public ordinances.

III. Consider the disposition of soul wherewith people should come to them.

IV. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to give reasons why people should attend on and be present at ordinances, where God has set them up among them.

1. Because God has commanded it, Heb. 10:15. The Lord calls his people to be present there, wherever it is. Thus there was the tabernacle of the congregation in the wilderness, whither the people resorted to the public worship; and afterwards the temple. And for ordinary the synagogues under the Old Testament were the places of public worship, the ruins of which the church complains of, Psal. 74:8. It was the practice of Christ himself to attend these places, as

we find, Luke 4:16. He sends ministers to preach, and therefore commands people to hear.

2. Because the public assemblies are for the honour of Christ in the world. They are that place where his honour dwells, where his people meet together to profess their subjection to his laws, to receive his orders, to seek his help to pay him the tribute of praise, the calves of their lips. And forasmuch as all are obliged to these things, all are obliged to be present and attend, and to cast in their mite into this treasury. And therefore the people of God look on Christ's standard in the world as fallen, when these assemblies are gone, as Elijah did, 1 Kings 19:10.

3. Because these assemblies are the ordinary place where Christ makes his conquest of souls, Rom. 10:14. The gospel is Christ's net wherein souls are caught. And it is always good to be in Christ's way. Who knows when that good word may come that may take hold of the man's heart, and make him Christ's prisoner, bound with the cords of love? A great number were caught at the first sermon preached after Christ's ascension, and cried out, 'What shall we do?' Acts 2:37. So Lydia hearing the apostle Paul, her heart was opened, Acts 16:14. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Happy are they that get the deepest wounds in this field. 'For the weapons of this warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,' 2 Cor. 10:4, 5.

4. They are Christ's trysting-place with his people, the galleries wherein our Lord walks, Exod. 20:24; the mountains of myrrh, where he will be till the day break. Those that desire communion with God, should seek him there, and wait on him where he has promised to be found. What a disadvantage had Thomas by his absence from one meeting where Christ met with the rest of the disciples!

5. The delights of Christ and his people meet there; for ordinances are the heaven on earth. Christ delights to be there with his people, Psal. 86:2. 'The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob,' Luke 22:15. 'With desire,' said our Lord, 'I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.' And they delight to be there with him, and for him. How passionately does David desire the ordinances! Psal. 84:1, 2. 'How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.' He prefers a day in God's courts to a thousand: 'I had rather,' says he, 'be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. And again, 'One thing,' says he, 'have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple,' Psal. 27:4. What good news was it to him to hear of an opportunity of waiting on God there! Psal. 122:1. 'I was glad,' says he, 'when they said unto me, Let us go up into the house of the Lord.'

Lastly, The necessities of all that mind for heaven require it. Had the ordinances not been necessary, God would never have appointed them. And sure they are not more necessary for any than those that least see their need of them. These are the blind souls that have need to come to the market of free grace, for that eye-salve that opens the eyes of those that see not. Have not Christ's soldiers need of them to clear their rusty armour? do not dead souls need them to quicken them? sleepy souls, to awaken them? They are the pools in the way to Zion, which the travellers to Zion have much need of to quench their thirst in their weary journey.

Surely the due consideration of these things may engage us all to make conscience of being all there present, as God gives opportunity.

II. I come to shew, in what respects people are before the Lord at public ordinances. The Lord is every where present; we can be no where but he is there, Psal. 139:7. But we are before him in a special

manner in the public assemblies. He holds the stars in his right hand, and walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Our Lord has a special concern there; the main part of his business on earth lies there; and must he not be about his Father's business! This consideration should engage us to be there. Satan will not miss to be there: where Christ has a church, the devil will endeavour to have a chapel. The fowls will be where there is seed sowing. So some understand that, 1 Cor. 11:10. 'For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head, because of the angels.' Now Christ is in the assemblies of his people,

1. Representatively. He has his agents there, his ministers, who are the Lord's proxies to court a wife for their Master's Son, 2 Cor. 11:2 his ambassadors to negotiate a peace betwixt God and sinners, 2 Cor. 5:20. Matth. 10:40. Christ's ministers are but as John was 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness.' The Speaker is in heaven. Hence the Lord is said to speak in or by the prophets. It is the Lord's goodness that the treasure is lodged in earthen, not in heavenly vessels, lest their splendour should darken his glory in men's eyes, and so dazzle their eyes. And for the now glorified, God 'holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it,' Job 26:9.

2. Efficaciously. His power is there, he works there, *et nihil agit in distans*, Psal. 75:1. 'For that thy name is near,' says the Psalmist, 'thy wondrous works declare.' The word of the Lord is a powerful word. The ministers of Christ drive not an empty chariot, Psal. 45:4. 'In thy majesty ride prosperously.' Christ is there giving life to some, strength to others, and death's wounds to others, Mic. 2:7. Psal. 45:5. Hos. 6:5. The Lord's word returns not empty; it does always something. Every preaching will either harden or soften you; it will drive you a step nearer heaven or hell. Now, are we before him in his ordinances,

1. As our witness. They had need to carry warily that have many eyes on them. While we are at ordinances, men's eyes and the devils' eyes are upon us; but what should affect us most is, that God's eye is on us

in a special manner, noticing how we behave, with what tenderness we handle holy things: and though our outward carriage be never so promising, God is witness to the heart-wanderings, Ezek. 33:31.

2. As our Judge. God has a tribunal as well as a throne in the public ordinances, to reward or punish his worshippers according to their works. This has made the blood of some to be mingled with their sacrifices, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu, Lev. 10:3. God is jealous of his honour. A curious look into the ark cost the Bethshemites dear; and a wrong touch of it cost Uzzah his life. And we would make the same use of that which David did, 1 Chron. 15:12, 13. 'Sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel, unto the place that I have appointed for it. For because ye did it not at first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.' It is true the gospel-dispensation is more spiritual; and therefore spiritual plagues are more usual now: but these ordinances cure the worst of plagues.

(3.) As our Lawgiver, Isa. 33:22. We are his creatures, and therefore his will must be our law. We are his upon many accounts; we know not our duty. He has set up the ministry in his church to declare to people what is their duty, Mal. 2:7. But, alas! many, by their despising the messengers of the Lord and their message, say, as Psal. 12:4. 'Who is lord over us?' But God will lord it over such in spite of their hearts, Hos. 13:10. 'I will be thy King.' But the heralds must proclaim the subjects' duty, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

(4.) As the Lord and master, of the family, who has provided liberally for all of his house. Ministers are the stewards of the house; but he is the Master, that has made the provision in the gospel, Isa. 25:6. He sends out his servants, saying, 'Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled,' Prov. 9:5. Look then how obedient children will stand and wait for supply of their necessities from an

affectionate parent; so ought we to stand and wait on in ordinances for the supply of our spiritual wants from our heavenly Father.

(5.) Lastly, As our God, which should strike us with reverence, Psal. 89:7. 'God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints; and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.' Psal. 95:6. 'O come let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.' And this challenges the most serious disposition of our hearts to worship him.

III. I proceed to consider the disposition of soul wherewith people should come to the public ordinances. It is with a spirit ready to hear all things commanded ministers of God. It implies the following things.

1. That ministers are to preach nothing to the people but what is the mind and will of God. Lawyers must not speak without authority of the law; and ministers must not speak but with a Thus saith the Lord; otherwise they go beyond their commission. The scriptures contain what is to be believed and practised by us. To coin new articles of faith is the work of Antichrist, not of the ministers of Christ. To impose and teach significant rites and ceremonies in the worship of God, is a piece of Popish dregs in the church of England; concerning which our Lord says, 'In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,' Matth. 15:9.

2. That it is the duty of ministers to labour to know the mind of God, as to particular messages which they are to carry to their people. Ministers are not to preach hand over head, whatever truths they can get to say to spend a half-hour in a sermon to the people. A word in season is very precious, Prov. 25:11; and 15:23. And ministers had need of the tongue of the learned.

3. Whatever message the Lord gives them to a people, they are to deliver it impartially, All things commanded them. It was Paul's

comfort that he had done so, Acts 20:20. 'I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you,' says he to the elders of Ephesus.

4. Lastly, People ought to receive these messages from ministers as from the mouth of the Lord, and comply with them; for it is not bare hearing, but hearing with obedience, that is the hearing pointed at in the text. And with this disposition of soul should people come to ordinances.

Now, this hearing of the word has these properties.

(1.) We should hear reverentially. God speaks by ministers' mouths; and seeing God speaks at all, we must hear so, Psal. 89:7; forecited. See how Eglon behaved, when he was accosted by Ehud, Judg. 3:20, 21. 'I have a message from God unto thee,' said Ehud. It is added, 'And he [Eglon] arose out of his seat;' denoting the reverence with which he was to receive the message. And so should we.

(2.) Diligently and attentively, Isa. 55:2. 'Hearken diligently unto me,' says the Lord. God Sends no message to us but what is of great concernment for us to hear; he does not take up our time with trifles; and when God speaks, it becomes us to be attentive.

(3.) Understandingly, so as to know the mind of God in what is preached, Matth. 13:11. We must endeavour to see heavenly things in their divine lustre, and to understand the things as well as the words. We should 'look into the perfect law of liberty, and continue therein, being not forgetful hearers, but doers of the word.' And were this the way of hearing, ministers would get more soul-cases to resolve than they do.

(4.) Believingly, John 9:27. He that hears as out of the mouth of God must needs believe what is said. If the word be not believed, it is all one as if it were not heard, Heb. 4:2. The soul rightly disposed to hear, is ready to yield itself the captive of divine revelation, and receive the kingdom of God as a little child to hear with application. The Lord's word is compared to rain, Amos 7:16; and the soul should

be as the dry and gaping ground, ready to drink it in, Psal. 143:6; though, alas! most are like the rock, upon which the rain makes no impression. Ministers make the plaister, but faith of application makes it stick.

5. Lastly, So as to practise what we hear. Though the ear hear, if the feet be not set on God's way, it is not acceptable to God, Jam. 1:22. That hearing that fills the head with knowledge, but not the heart with holiness, will serve only to let people see the way to hell more clearly.

I come now to the improvement of this doctrine.

USE I. For reproof. It reproves,

1. Those who absent themselves from ordinances, and will not come to hear what is commanded us of God. A very small matter will prevail with many to sit at home, and loiter away the Lord's day in many places. When ministers are at pains to seek something that might edify their souls, they will not be at the pains to hear. O what contempt is poured on the gospel at this day by the pride of some, and the laziness of others! Whatever temptations any of you may have this way, I advise such, when they meet any thing that may seem to hinder them from the public ordinances, that they do in the first place, weigh the matter before the Lord, and see if it will bear weight there. If it do, they may look to God for the upmaking of their loss; if not, they cannot. For it is a most deceitful principle of some, that they can spend the Sabbath-day as well at home. It reflects on the wisdom of God in appointing public ordinances, and is most unlike the practice of the saints, to whom it was a great burden to be deprived of them. As for those who separate from our communion, I wish they would consider that Christ keeps communion with us, as many of the children of God can testify; and then say, as Zech. 8:23. 'We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.'

2. It reproves those who come to ordinances, but hear not the word as becomes those who are to hear what is commanded of God. Such are,

(1.) Irreverent hearers. Many behave so as it appears there is no fear of God before their eyes. Some are sleeping, others gazing hither and thither, altogether careless and inattentive, to whom the word is as the seed presently picked up by the fowls. Their bodies are present, but their hearts are gone; they are the idols that have eyes, but see not; that have ears, but hear not.

(2.) Supercilious nice hearers, who sit as Judges of the word, and not as they that are to be judged by it. Hence such will be ready to commend the preacher, not to loath themselves; or else to reproach the preacher, and endeavour to expose him: like the riddle that lets through the good grain, and keeps the chaff; or like flies that fasten on festering sores.

(3.) Ignorant and stupid hearers, who hear the word, but neither know nor endeavour to know God's mind in it. A good voice and good word please them. These are not concerned to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

(4.) Unbelieving hearers, Isa. 53:1. Unbelief is a defence against the power of the word, Matth. 13:58; and an unbelieving heart is a proud heart, ready to storm at the word, like Ahab. And if the word hit them, their passion ariseth, the minister meant them, and wanted to expose them, and so they are filled with prejudice.

5. Lastly, Such as make no application of the word to themselves, but are ready to give it away to others. It is the weakness of godly souls, sometimes to give ear to nothing but what may tend to their discouragement; and it is the neckbreak of others to give away threats from themselves.

3. It reproves those who do not set themselves to hear what God commands ministers to preach, but will command ministers to

preach so and so. Thus bands have been laid on the gospel in our land in the late persecuting times, when the exercise of the ministry was allowed by the magistrate with limitations, which could neither be imposed nor accepted without sin. And as little power have the people to limit them, or give orders concerning what we should preach; but every faithful minister will say as Micaiah, 1 Kings 22:14. 'As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak.'

USE II. Of exhortation. Attend on ordinances, and come with a design reverently, diligently, attentively, understandingly, believingly, and so to practise, to hear what is commanded us of God. We desire you to take nothing as matter of faith on our authority, but to do as the Bereans, who searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so, Acts 17:11. I offer the following motives to press this exhortation.

1. Consider the way how the word came to the world. It was by the Mediator, John 1:18. When Adam fell, death stared him in the face; and he ran away from God, till the word of reconciliation came forth, Gen. 3:15; which disappointed the expectation of devils, surprised angels, and revived the self-murdering creature.

2. Consider, it is the word of life, Deut. 32:46, 47. Nothing concerns us so nearly as this. If ye do not prize the word, and hear what is commanded us of God, there can be no comfort on a deathbed. It will make us table complaints against you before the Lord; and we will have a sad meeting at the great day. But if ye will hear, ye will be our joy and crown; your souls shall be saved in the day of the Lord, and we will bless the day that ever we met. Come to ordinances with a keen appetite after the bread of life; and pray for us, that the Lord may deal kindly with us, and furnish us with proper nourishment for your souls.

A CAVEAT AGAINST RECEIVING THE GOSPEL IN VAIN

2 COR. 6:1.—We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

I HAVE been calling you to a diligent attendance upon the ordinances, and now I come to beseech you not to receive the grace of God in vain: for if you should attend the means of grace ever so carefully, yet if you receive the grace of God in vain, all your labour is lost, and ye must perish in your sins at last.

The words I have read are a pathetic exhortation, in which,

1. The party exhorting is the apostle, in his own name, and that of all faithful ministers, who are called workers together with God. Compare 1 Cor. 3:9. In the purchase of salvation Christ had none with him; but in the application of it he makes use of gospel-ministers, working with him, as instrumental causes, in exhorting, &c. and bringing the word to the ears of people.

2. The manner of the exhortation, beseeching; which denotes mildness and gentleness in dealing with souls, and withal earnestness and fervency of address.

3. The matter of it. The grace of God here denotes the gospel, as it is expressly called, Tit. 2:11. It is so denominated, (1.) In respect of its rise, which was mere grace. (2.) Of its subject, being the doctrine of grace, offering the free favour of God to sinners in Christ. (3.) In respect of its end, which is grace. (4.) Of its revelation to particular places. To receive it in vain, is to have the gospel among them, but not to be the better of it to salvation, as the seed is in vain received by the ground, which grows not up, but is lost. The doctrine is,

DOCT. 'That people to whom the gospel is sent, had need to take heed that they receive it not in vain.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. How the gospel may be received in vain.

II. Make improvement.

I. I am to shew, how the gospel may be received in vain. And here it will be necessary to shew,

1. In what respects the gospel cannot be in vain.

2. In what respects it may be received in vain.

First, I am to shew, in what respects the gospel cannot be in vain. And it cannot be in vain,

1. In respect of God; he cannot fall short of what he purposeth to bring to pass by it, Isa. 46:10. 'My counsel shall stand, (says he), and I will do all my pleasure.' That looking for fruit, mentioned, Isa. 5:4; is ascribed to God after the manner of men; but an omniscient omnipotent Being cannot properly be disappointed, Isa. 55:10, 11. 'For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.'

(1.) All his elect will be brought in by it. Hence, when the apostles Barnabas and Paul preached at Antioch in Pisidia, and met with much opposition, it is observed, however, that 'as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed,' Acts 13:48. The sound of the gospel-trumpet will gather the elect, however vain the sound be to others; for Christ's people shall be made willing in the day of his power, Psal. 110:3. Though the rain fall in vain on the rocks, yet it does not so on the good ground. And that glorious instrument will be honourably laid by at the great day, having done its work.

(2.) His mercy and justice will be cleared by it, so as that gospel-despisers shall appear most justly condemned, Acts 13:46; while men have rejected the counsel of God against themselves. The offer of reconciliation will justify God's procedure abundantly against gospel-despisers.

2. It cannot be in vain, in respect of faithful ministers, who, according to the grace given them, pursue the great end of their office, viz. their acting as ambassadors for God, and praying sinners in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God, 2 Cor. 5:20.

(1.) In respect of their acceptance with God. Though their labours do no good, God will accept of their sincere endeavours to serve him in his work, Gal. 4:11; compare 2 Cor. 2:15, 16. Preaching the gospel faithfully, and warning every man, is our duty; converting souls is God's work. If ministers faithfully discharge their duty, and yet success answer not, God will accept their work, Ezek. 33:8, 9. Isa. 6.

(2.) In respect of their reward of grace. Some ministers God sets to tread out the corn, while they freely eat of their labours, and have the satisfaction to see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in their Master's hand. The mouths of others are muzzled; and they have nothing but weary work, like that of the disciples, when they said to their Lord, 'We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing,' Luke 5:5. But it shall not be in vain: God does not proportion his faithful servants' reward to their success, but to their pains and faithfulness. For as it was with the Master, so it is with the servants, Isa. 49:4. 'I have laboured in vain, (says he), I have spent my strength for nought; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.'

3. It cannot be altogether in vain in respect of honest-hearted hearers, Micah 2:7. 'Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?' When the word falls on good ground, it will bring forth fruit, though not always alike. It is hard to say, that ever God sends his gospel to any place, but there are some to be bettered by it, even

then when he is taking his farewell of a people, as in the case of the Jews. There were seven thousand in Israel that had not bowed the knee to Baal in the time of Elijah, even when that prophet thought there had not been one.

4. It cannot be utterly in vain as to any that hear it, Is. 55:11 forecited. It will have some effect following it. Even those who most of all receive it in vain as to good success, yet it is not in vain.

(1.) As to a testimony for God against them, to be produced at the last day, Rev. 3:20. 'Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.' Behold angels and men, be ye witnesses, that here is an offer of me to sinners. Though they should refuse to hear the message with their bodily ears, yet if it come where they are, it will be a witness against them, Matth. 10:14, 15. The dust of their feet will witness they were there with Christ's message, and that salvation was in their offer. The servants of Christ must set up the standard, whether any will gather to it or not, Ezek. 2:7. See ver. 5.

(2.) As to the manifestation of unsoundness, Eph. 5:13. As the light of the sun will discover things in their own colours, though we wink never so hard; so the gospel will hang the sign of folly at every man's door out of Christ. The gospel was in vain to none more than the greatest pretenders to religion in Christ's time; but see the effect of it, Mal. 3:2. 'But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like the refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap.' Matth. 3:12. 'His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into his garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.' The wind will discover chaff by corn, though impotency must be at the work to change it into good grain. Hence the gospel oft-times draws the pillow from under people's heads, that never thoroughly awaken, tormenting them that dwell on the earth. Hence we read of some that 'say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits; get out

of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the holy One of Israel to cease from before us,' Isa. 30:10, 11. There is much noise at this day about faithful preaching; and I do not doubt unfaithful preachers are wanting; but I greatly doubt if Christ's thoughts and men's thoughts will agree about what it is. Concerning this I would ask you,

Quest. 1. Whether that preaching which crosses the heart-corruptions of the hearers, even the best of them, or that which is suited and most agreeable to the humours of the hearers, and tickles them most, is the most faithful preaching? See Gal. 1:10; 'Do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.' Where I shall only observe, that Paul makes no difference of men, professors or others.

2. Whether can a soul, ignorant of Christ and its own natural state, a profane man and a formal hypocrite, sit softest under that preaching, whose main scope is to level at people's particular case, on which the balance will turn at the great day, or that which lies further off from the vitals of practical godliness, and rubs on none so little as the hearers? 2 Tim. 2:15.

3. Whether the great stress of faithful preaching lies in insisting chiefly on such sins of the time as may be reformed, and yet we go to hell at the hinder end, or on those things that have been, are, and will be, the bloody sins of all times, which if they could be got reformed, Christ would get heart-friends, and we should certainly see his face for ever in heaven?

4. ult. Whether is it the most faithful preaching that fills the hearers with convictions of guilt, self-loathing, and deep humiliation before the Lord, or that which sends them away commending the preacher, and puffed up with self-conceit? If faithful preaching were weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, the hearts of most hearers would say, that they have more of it than they can bear. I do profess, I have had less difficulty to preach things relating to the public, when I knew

those were hearing me whose hearts would have been galled with it, than amongst you, where there appears more zeal for these things than for true holiness of heart and life, lest my deceitful heart should be led aside to preach to please men. And not without grief of heart have I often seen the snare, when, upon my beginning to speak of such things, an unusual attention and liveliness has suddenly run through among us, which has presently died out with that particular, and become as flat and dead as before at the most weighty points of practical godliness. But I must discharge my conscience according to my small measure, both as to the case of the public and private, whatsoever use men make of it.

(3.) As to execution on souls, if not on lusts. Christ's sword is two-edged, and with one of the two it will wound, Psal. 45:5; if it miss a man's lusts, it will not miss his soul, Hos. 6:5; 'If it open not the blind eye, it will put it out: if it soften not the hard heart, it will make it harder, Isa. 6:10. The gospel never left a nation, parish, or person, as it found them, but either better or worse. 'If I had not come,' says Christ, 'and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin,' John 15:22. The ministers of the gospel in its most unsuccessful times, drive not an empty chariot; Christ is in it, and his arrows are flying about him, either to kill or make alive.

(4.) Lastly, As to the aggravation of men's condemnation, Matth. 11:22, 24. The more the light of the gospel is despised on earth, the more violent is the flame in hell. Where the ladder to heaven is set up and not used, there will be more deep sinking into the pit. There is no sin like the despising of the remedy of sin. Refused grace will burn like coals of juniper, Heb. 10:29.

Secondly, I come to shew, in what respects the gospel may be received in vain. A thing is received in vain when it falls short of its native effects and ends, as physic does when it purgeth not, Gal. 4:11. Now, in the general, the gospel is received in vain,

1. When it profits not men to salvation, which is the great end of the contrivance of the gospel, Phil. 2:16. When men die eternally with the meat of their souls in their mouths, and starve while the manna rains about their tent-doors; while the soul remains and dies in the prison, though Christ comes and proclaims liberty to it; thus it is often received in vain, Luke 14.

2. When the fruits of it are not brought forth in people's lives, Matth. 3:8. When the gospel has its native effect on men, it changes their hearts and lives. It is the rain of heaven that will have meet fruits following it, if it be not received in vain. The fruits of the gospel are two, faith and holiness.

(1.) Faith, Rom. 10:17; 'Faith cometh by hearing.' The gospel is that which holds forth the mean of the soul's reunion with God by faith in Christ, the only way to bring sinners back to God again. Now, when this is not effected, the gospel is received in vain. Hence the prophet complains, Isa. 53:1; 'Who hath believed our report?'

(2.) Holiness, Tit. 2:11. When this seed of the word is sown in the heart, it will sanctify it, John 15:3; Eph. 5:26. It is that word by which the elect are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, having a converting and sanctifying power when impregnated by the Spirit. Now, according as these things fail, the gospel is received in vain. More particularly, the gospel is received in vain,

1. When the doctrine of it is corrupted, Gal. 4:11; as in vain does that stomach receive meat, that corrupts it instead of digesting it. And thus is the gospel entertained in the land at this day, while error and delusions abound, and the Confession of Faith, that excellent standard of pure doctrine, is attacked and vilified on every hand; and more particularly when the doctrine of grace is corrupted, against which almost all sects do bend their force, and in opposition to which they do usually meet. Two things here deserve tears of blood.

(1.) Much legal preaching, where duty is indeed pressed, and sin reproved, but the evangelic nature of duties is little cleared up, and men are driven into themselves to spin their own ruin out of their own bowels, and Christ and his grace are not preached, because not understood. And, which is most lamentable, there is little sense among professors to discern this legal strain that reigns in the sermons of many, *bona vox et bona verba*.

(2.) Much legal practice among professors. Their duties, like Dragons, are set in the room of Christ. There is little experience of turning out of ourselves, but a constant turning in to ourselves for what we do. And no small weight is laid on duties, nay, upon a very opinion in the matter of God's favour. The reason is, they have never had the work of humiliation deep enough on their spirits.

2. When the simplicity of gospel-worship is forsaken, and is adulterated with men's inventions, Matth. 15:2. 2 Cor. 11:3. And even thus the idolatry of the mass, and the superstitions service of the church of England, have dared to set up their face, with the countenance of not a few, in a land of light. England once had the simplicity of gospel-worship established among them. Had it not been so far received in vain, they had not sit down again on their old dregs; and had our rulers had a due regard to the simplicity of the gospel, they had not in their union with them, consented to their fixing themselves on these dregs of theirs, contrary to moral duty forbidding to consent to sin, and to the superadded obligation of the covenant. And it may be, were the temptation laid to our doors, it would appear that we have received the gospel in vain too. For when once people decline from God's institutions, and obtrude their fancies for Bible duties, it is hard to say how far they may go. But beware of this. Let us be spiritual in our walk with God; it is the best preservative that I know against it.

3. When they are ashamed to appear for it, and have not a brow to keep and hold fast what the Lord has given. In vain is it received, that people have no confidence to hold fast when they have it, Rev. 3:11.

How many are ashamed of gospel truths and ways! they will be gibed out of them. We must contend for the faith; and this is a day wherein the Lord seems to be calling this church to contend for those privileges which he has given her, and none have power to take from her, particularly that of appointing fasts and thanksgivings; though we should manage our contendings in such a way as becomes the matters of the God of order. Prayers, tears, and the word of their testimony, are the most proper arms of the church.

4. When the gospel cannot look gross immoralities out of countenance among people. Surely in vain is it there received where the devil reigns at ease notwithstanding, Luke 19:8, 9. Truly much in vain is the gospel received among us this way. Ah! Sirs, is it not so when profane swearing is so frequent, Sabbath-breaking, contempt of gospel ordinances, uncleanness, every one devouring another, lying, cheating, abound, and common honesty is rare to be found? &c. Truly it is a sign that there is little power with ministers' preaching, and little room it gets in people's hearts.

5. When it leaves professors upon their dregs of formality, as well as the profane in their profanity. It is but cold entertainment the gospel gets when it gets room once or twice a-day in people's houses, but has no access to their hearts, to raise up there the power of godliness; truly it will never set them the length of heaven, 2 Tim. 3:5. Ah for the deep lethargy that this generation is fallen into! conversion-work is much at a stand, soul-exercise is grown a stranger to the most part; there is no growth but in naughtiness and self-conceit.

6. When gospel-ordinances and gospel ministers are contemned. Were not the gospel received in vain, the house where his honour dwells, and the galleries where he walks, would be prized; and the feet of them that hear the glad tidings would be precious. But, alas! all is contrary here. His ordinances are trampled upon, his servants are discouraged, and broken on every hand. Few want brow enough to break over the awful hedge that God has set about them: 'He that despiseth you, despiseth me.' We are as little troubled with the

scrupulous in coming to us for information from the word concerning different practices, as with cases of soul-exercise.

7. When they are not thankful for it. The Lord hath done great things for us; but the generation is waxed wanton, so as there seems to be a sort of fondness to see the church in confusion again. Well, come when it will, it is like we will cool of that heat, and learn to prize what is now lightly let of.

8. Lastly, Most of all when Christ is not received by faith into the soul, Matth. 22. Were there never so much strictness of life, mortification, reeling amongst the affections, and this be wanting, all is to no purpose. Unbelief, or rejecting of Christ, is the great quarrel that God pursues in time and eternity against the hearers of the gospel. But, ah! is not the preaching of Christ sapless at this day? are not our eyes held, that we cannot behold his glory? he is despised and rejected of men still.

I shall conclude with an improvement of this subject.

Take heed ye receive not the grace of God, the gospel, in vain. Two things ye would especially take heed to in this matter.

1. Take heed the gospel leave you not still out of Christ. It is certain, (1.) That the gospel finds people growing upon the old stock, and out of Christ, Ezek. 16. (2.) That without Christ men are without hope: let them profess or be what they will, if they be not ingrafted into Christ, they are nothing, Eph. 2:12. John 15:6. (3.) That the gospel is the great mean appointed of God to bring sinners to Christ, the ministry of reconciliation, 2 Cor. 5:18. It is by this that sinners are brought to the marriage of the King's Son, Matth. 22. O take heed ye receive not the gospel in vain. The cry, Can. 3:2 ult. 'Go forth, ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart,' is come to your ears; beware ye sit not still. These invitations, Psal. 24:7. 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be

ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in;' and Rev. 3:20. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me;' beware they leave you not so. There is a treasure in this field, one pearl of great price in this market, and it is in your offer.

2. Take heed it leave you not without a saving change in your hearts and lives. It is impossible you can be saved without this, John 3:3. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Heb. 11:14. And this gospel is the mean of it, 1 Pet. 1:23, 24, 25. Faithful ministers will be in pain till Christ be formed in people, Gal. 4:19. What is their preaching, beseeching, exhorting, &c. but pains to bring forth? But, alas! we may sit down with that, Isa. 26:18. 'We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind, we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.' O for that day when that promise shall be accomplished, ver. 19. 'Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise: awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.' And this is a change that must be carrying on while here, Eph. 4:21 and that by the same means it was begun, unless ye receive the grace of God in vain, John 15:2. O! Sirs, what branches of the old man is this knife snedding off; what hellish weeds is the gospel in its ordinary preaching to you plucking up? Sure they are not wanting in our hearts and lives, and sure there will be some execution doing on them, if ye receive not the gospel in vain.

Dear friends, God has sent you the gospel, and has set up his ordinances among you; despise not the treasure, because it is in such an earthen vessel. I would fain see the gospel doing good, a day of God's power to Ettrick again. I dare not think I have been altogether useless here: but truly, when I look upon the case of this parish in general, and on the success of my ministry in it, my heart sinks, being afraid that I have bestowed labour in vain, yea, worse than merely in vain, and God, though most justly, has dealt bitterly with

me, and put a heavy, heavy piece of work in my hand. But O that the doleful effects of this reached no farther than to me! O that it were well with you, though my eyes were held not to see it for my comfort! But the works of the flesh are manifest, and continue and grow under a preached gospel, to which the appetite is lost, while the beauty and glory of practical godliness is under a dreadful vail amongst us. I would not willingly stand in the way of your mercy; but if I be indeed the stumbling-block that lies between you and Christ and the power of godliness, I pray the Lord may remove that block out of your way, what way he thinks best, that another face for Christ, for the gospel and true godliness, might be put upon the parish of Ettrick. But stand I must in my post, till he that sent me in it call me off; and I desire to be doing while it is to-day, ere the night come on when there shall be no more working. Wonder not that this matter is laid out with this weight: We are workers together with God, and therefore have need to blush and be humbled, that we cannot be more deeply concerned that ye receive not the grace of God in vain*. Consider,

1. We are workers with God. It is not our own but our Lord's work that we are about. God has made our Lord and Master heir of all things, and he has sent us forth to court a spouse for him. There is none that can say so much to the commendation of their Lord as we may: for he is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand, yea, he is altogether lovely: and there is no bride so unworthy as the daughter of Zion. And shall our Lord get the nay-say off the hands of ugly, hell-hued, beggarly souls, and the prince of darkness be preferred to the Prince of Peace? Our Lord has got the gift of the kingdom from his Father, and of this land among others, Psal. 2:8 and he has sent us out to beseech you and command you in his name to submit to our royal Master: and must we tell him, that ye will not have this man to reign over you? Luke 19:14.

2. God works with us. We are but the voice of one crying; the Speaker is in heaven, and speaks from heaven, though by men, Heb. 12:25. Therefore the slighting of our message is a slighting of the Lord

himself. See Matth. 28:20. 'Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.' Have ye never had the secrets of your hearts made manifest by the preaching of the word? why then fall ye not down before our Lord? why say ye not, We will go with you, for the Lord is with you? O fight not against God.

3. The message we bring you is the grace of God; and shall it be received in vain? This gospel,

(1.) Is most necessary grace. What a dismal darkness overclouded the world by Adam's fall, more terrible than if the sun, moon, and stars, had been for ever wrapt up in the blackness of darkness, in which we should for ever have lain, had not this grace appeared as a shining sun to dispel it, Tit. 2:11. So the word rendered appeared properly signifies. And shall we now like night-owls flee from the face of the rising sun, and like wild beasts get into our hellish dens, when this sun is up? Are we struck blind with its light, and such creatures of darkness, that we will love darkness rather than light?

(2.) It is an uncommon grace. This sun enlightens but a small part of the world. The most part are yet without the gospel; and this land had it not always. Nothing but grace brought it to, and has kept it with us. And shall we receive it in vain? Ah! will not the wild Americans think us unworthy of a place in the same hell with them.

(3.) It is the greatest grace that God ever bestowed on the world. God has given some nations gold mines, precious stones, spices, plenty of corns, &c. and he has given some the gospel without these; so that we may say of them, 'Israel then shall dwell in safety alone; the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places,' Deut. 33:28, 29. Barley-bread and the gospel is good cheer, if people receive it not in vain, Isa. 30:20, 21. There is a treasure in the gospel, Christ in it is

the greatest of all mercies, Matth. 13:44. Ah! shall such a price be put in the hands of fools, that have no heart to it.

(4.) It is God's last grace to the world, Heb. 1:1. No other dispensation of grace shall ever the world see more. Now, Sirs, the last ship for Immanuel's land is making ready to go; therefore now or never, Heb. 10:26, 27. 'For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.' This gospel is the Lord's farewell sermon to the world. The Lord has made a feast for the world these five thousand years, and the last dish is served up now. O then receive it not in vain!

(5.) Lastly, It is grace that may be lost, Matth. 23:37, 38. The sun of the gospel has gone down in some places, where it shined as clearly as ever it did in Scotland, and God knows if ever it rise again there. That we have received it much in vain, is plain from the heavy hand of God on us at this day in temporal calamities, Hos. 2:9 yea, and his threatening us with the removal of the gospel, ver. 11. O then receive it not in vain; but, while ye have the light, be walking in it: for to look no farther than the entertainment the gospel is getting at this day, it is a sad sign there is a black night abiding us: so that I think ministers and people should set themselves about it as a way-going commodity.

THE DANGER OF NOT COMPLYING WITH THE GOSPEL-CALL

PROV. 9:12.—If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.

THIS verse is the epilogue or conclusion of the gospel-treaty with sinners, carried on with them by the messengers of Christ in his name. It is a solemn declaration or protestation that it is shut up with. The entertainment the gospel meets with, is twofold, and there are two sorts (and but two) of gospel-hearers. (1.) Compilers with the gospel-call; these are called the wise. (2.) Refusers; these are styled scorers. The declaration looks to both, and is carried as it were, after the offer is made, to every individual man and woman's door that hears the gospel. It is not, They that are wise, shall be wise for themselves; but hereby the Lord speaks to every one in particular, If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself, &c. Which class soever one puts himself into, here is his case declared. (1.) If thou be wise, and comply, the gain shall be thine own; it is not the Lord's, but the fruit shall drop into thine own lap. (2.) If thou scornest, and refusest, the loss shall be thine, it will lie chiefly at least on thine own head. So the exclusive particle is taken, Psal. 51:4. 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned.'

I design not to insist on these words, but only with them to shut up the call to the improvement of the gospel and religion which I have been giving you. Thus the great duty is laid before you: and now I would apply the words of the text unto you on this occasion, and to every one of you. Ye have heard the nature of faith and repentance, the utility of public ordinances for salvation, and the necessity of not receiving the gospel in vain. Now, sinner, what wilt thou do? wilt thou comply with the gospel-offer or not? Well, I protest and declare in the terms of the text, If thou be wise thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it. I shall branch out this protestation in three particulars.

First, If thou be no compiler with the gospel-call, thou art a scorer of it: there is no mids. This is evident from the text, which divides all gospel-hearers into these two sorts. Now, thou art not a compiler with the gospel-call, as long as,

1. Thou entertainest any prejudice against religion, and wilt not come to Christ, John 5:40. Thou art a refuser in that case, thou wilt not be obedient but turnest away thine ear and shoulder. Men may receive and comply with a form of religion and a profession, who are yet under reigning prejudice against the power of godliness, 2 Tim. 3:5. Now, since religion lies inwardly, and consists not in word, but in power, these are not compilers, for they say they will not come into the inner court.

2. Thou art in a doubt whether to come or not, or delayest and puttest off. Halts between two opinions are not compilers with the gospel-call. Nor will the call admit of a delay, like that of the sluggard, 'Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep,' Prov. 6:10. For see the effect of such a sluggish delay, ver. 11. 'So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.' It is, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.' If thou delay then till to-morrow, thou rejectest the call, thou art a scorner of the offer.

3. If in any case thou dost come, dost not turn from thy sins unto God in Christ, sincerely, thoroughly, and universally, thou dost not comply, Jer. 3:10. The hypocrite, that satisfies himself with his partial turning, is a non-complier, a rebel against King Christ, as well as the profane, and shall bear the weight of it, Psal. 125:5. 'As for such as turn aside into their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.' Now, in this case of thy not complying with the gospel-call, our God looks on thee as the scorner of it, Psal. 1:1. Prov. 1:22, 26. What king proclaiming an indemnity to rebels, would not look on those that refused to take the benefit of it, as scornors of his clemency? Is it possible for him to look on them as neutrals with respect to his interest? nay, he must look on them as engrained enemies to his person and government. So is the case here. And that thou art guilty of scorning in this, will be evident, if you consider, that, by your not complying with the gospel-call,

(1.) Thou abusest the mercy, goodness, and patience of God. God offers thee mercy and grace in his own way, upon thy coming to him in Christ, leaving thy sins. But thou graspest at his mercy in thy sins, as if thou wouldst offer violence to the mercy of God, Saying, as Deut. 29:19. 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.' Thou snatchest peace out of his hand, and by thy grasping of gospel-privileges, making no conscience of gospel-duties, scornest the call.

(2.) Thou slightest, making no account of the gospel-call, but indeed lookest on it as a trifling, inconsiderable thing, Job 41:29. Is not this the treatment the gospel meets with from the most part? 'They make light of it,' Matth. 22:5. The great offer of the gospel is despised, the good things it offers are undervalued, and any the least worldly pleasure or profit is preferred; and for the threatenings wherewith it is backed, they are in effect looked upon but as bugbears and scarecrows, the sounding again of the mountains: and thus they are scorned.

(3.) Thou exposest it to shame and dishonour; and is not that scorning, Prov. 20:1. A generous spirit knows how far a man is out, when his offered kindness and good-will is neglected. And thus thou treatest the God that made thee. He offers thee his friendship before the world, angels, and men, and thou regardest it not; the Son of God courts thee by his ambassadors to a marriage with himself, but thou slightest the proposal. And is not that to scorn and affront him, before all that are witnesses to the neglect thou puttest upon him?

(4.) Thou failest of thy fair promises, and so defeatest and frustratest good expectations concerning thee. And is not that scorning? Matth. 2:16. Heathens do not scorn the royal Bridegroom; for as he was never in their offer, so they never said they would not take him: but as thou wast baptized in his name, thou didst engage to be his, and yet thou ruest again, and sayest, Thou wilt have none of him. How many times hast thou broken thy word to him, after thou hadst given consent, yea, sealed the contract before many witnesses as at a

sacrament? How often hast thou scorned thy God, as the son did his father, saying, 'I go, but went not?' Matth. 21:30.

(5.) Lastly, Thou makest thyself merry with thy disobedience to this call, Prov. 14:9. Is not that scorning? How many are they that expressly mock at religion and seriousness, and look on many of the duties of religion as below them? But besides, whatever joy thou hast in any thing, especially in sinful practices, while thou slightest the call of the gospel, it is in effect a scorning of that call. Even as the condemned malefactor, who being offered a reprieve or pardon, refuses it, and yet is jovial, does scorn the pardon, the king's mercy.

Hence ye may conclude, that God will deal with you as scorers. A king finding himself mocked and scorned, falls into rage, as Herod did, Matth. 2:16. And God's anger will burn hot against he scorers of his grace, Prov. 1:22, 26. Those that will have none of his grace, will drink deep of his cup of vengeance, Luke 19:27.

Secondly, If thou comply with the gospel-call, thou shalt therein act wisely for thyself: the gain shall be thine own, the fruit shall fall into thine own bosom. Two things are imported in this.

1. Men, by their complying with the gospel call to faith, and holiness, and repentance, do not bring any profit or gain to God. There is a great profit by it, but it descends to themselves, ascends not to God, Job 22:2 and 35:7. Psal. 16:2.

To confirm this, consider,

(1.) God is infinite in perfections, self-sufficient, and therefore the creatures can add nothing to him; for nothing can be added to what is infinite; and nothing given unto him who possesseth all things.

(2.) All the goodness and profitableness of men or angels, or any creatures, comes from God. He that gives all things to all, needs nothing from any, Acts 17:25. We received all from God: where is that, then, we have to give him, whereby he may be profited?

Inf. 1. Then let no man be scared from coming to God in Christ, because of his unworthiness, that he is an useless and a fruitless creature, that can do nothing for God. For the best and holiest of men cannot profit him. He will never turn his back, because we bring nothing with us, Isa. 55:2.

2. Mistake not the reason of our Lord's earnestness with you to bring you to repentance. It is not that he expects any advantage by your return; it is for your own good, not for his. He is not dealing with you, as one that hires a servant, because he needs one, and cannot want one; but like a compassionate person that is dealing with a frantic one, that will needs destroy himself in the water. God may say to the greatest men, the richest, aye, and the most penitent sinners, and the holiest alive, I have no need of you.

3. Ye can do God no real hurt by your continuing impenitent in your sins, Job 35:6, 8. Your sins can reach him as little to his loss, as your obedience to his profit. All sin is against the mind of God, but there is no sin against the happiness of God. If it were possible, and all the angels in heaven, and all the men upon earth, should conspire with the devils against him, it could not diminish one jot of his happiness, nor create him the least real uneasiness thereby. All is but like a dog's barking at the moon, or one's rushing his head against a rock, which stands unmoved, but he is wounded.

4. Lastly, By thy compliance with the call of God, and the duties of religion, while others slight them, do not thou think thou obligest God, or that he is more indebted to thee than to others, Luke 17:10. Thou actest indeed more for thy own interest than they; but as he suffers no damage by their folly, so he reaps no advantage by thy duties.

2. If thou compliest with the call of the gospel, the profit shall be thine own; though God do not and cannot gain by it, thou shalt. Thou shalt be wise for thyself. The phrase imports two things.

1st, Thou shalt gain by it, thou shalt advance thy own interest thereby. Men praise them that do good to themselves; they that hearken to the gospel-call do so. When the rest of the world are misspending their time and talents like a parcel of fools, thou art acting a wise part, consulting thy own true interest. Briefly, this gain lies in two things.

(1.) In saving, or preventing loss. Thou shalt prevent the loss of God's favour, thy own soul, happiness, &c. A penny saved is a penny gained. And is not a soul saved from the pit a noble gain? Well, if thou be wise for thyself, thou shalt save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.

(2.) In getting what we want. If thou be wise for thyself thou shalt not only save, but get, make a purchase. Thou shalt gain for time, and gain for eternity, 1 Tim. 4:8. Whatever drops out of the promise, or is wrung out of the everlasting covenant, they drop all into the lap of the penitent sinner. And there is all in them for time and eternity. The earth is in them, and the heavens are in them. So shalt thou be wise for thyself in gaining these.

2dly, Nobody shall go between thee and thy gain, in the enjoyment of it. How often is that verified quickly, 'One soweth, and another reapeth;' one has the pains, and another gets the fruit? Matth. 6:20. 'Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.' Many a wise man of the world is a fool for himself, and wise for others. He gathers, and others enjoy the treasure. And death makes it so at length; and therefore the world's good things are called another man's, only those of another world are our own, which no man shall leave to his heirs, Luke 16:12. Now, if thou be wise for thyself, thou shalt carry thy gain into another world with thee, and it shall be thine own, and not another's.

Thirdly, If by not complying with the gospel-call, thou scornest it, thou shalt get the weight of that to bear thyself: Thou alone shalt

bear it. And it is heavier than mountains of brass, and of everlasting continuance, even everlasting judgment without mercy, Prov. 1:26. And,

1. Thou shalt bear the blame of it. It is a heavy blame, a weighty guilt; but thou shalt not get another's back in all the creation to lay it on; and shift it off thy own. They that comply may bless God; they that do not may thank themselves. The cause is from themselves.

2. Thou shalt bear the loss of it, the loss of what thou scornest, the loss of grace, the favour of God, the loss of heaven. Thy blood shall be on thine own head. The scorning of the call brings a heavy load of wrath; but thou alone shalt bear it: that is,

(1.) God that called thee shall not bear it, either blame or loss. A man's heart perverts his way now, and his heart fretteth against the Lord; and I cannot think that the hearts of the reprobates in hell will be more reconciled to this dispensation, Matth. 25:24, 25. But the Lord will throw the weight of it back on thee, and thou alone shalt bear it! for though he was not obliged to give thee grace, yet he offered it to thee, and thou refused it.

(2.) His faithful servants that warned thee, and called thee to comply with the call of God, shall not bear it, Ezek. 33:9. Nay, every call of theirs, every sermon, exhortation, reproof, and warning, in public or private, shall turn it back on thyself. Every sigh, groan, waste of their strength, for warning thee, shall turn it upon thee with a witness: And thou alone shalt bear it. Nay,

(3.) They that had a hand in thy not complying shall not bear it, They that tempted thee to sin, thy graceless neighbours and companions, whose face thou shalt curse the day that ever thou sawest it, they shall not bear it. Even unfaithful ministers, who either shall not warn thee, or by their unholy life harden thee, they shall not bear it, and thou wilt not find shelter under their wings. Nay, the devil himself, who goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, and

does what he can to hinder thee, even he shall not bear it. For they do not force thee, but entice and tempt thee to sin; they lay the bait, but it is thy own fault that thou embracest it: they lay the stumbling-block, the occasion of sinning, in thy way; but thou art obliged to go by it, and hold off from it.

It is true they shall bear the weight of the hand they had in thy ruin; but alas! what is that to thee? what good will it do to thy poor soul? It is in this case as when one draws another into the water, and both are drowned together! alas! what is it to the man whom the other drew, that his companion is drowned himself too? that does not save his life, Ezek. 33:8. So they shall not bear it, but thou alone shalt bear it.

[1.] None shall bear it for thee, nor take the burden off thy back. The soul that sinneth, it dies. The sinner shall be the sufferer. They that refuse the surety of the Father's chusing, to bear the burden in their stead, shall not get another surety nor burden-bearer for them among angels or men. Nay, thou alone, and not another for thee, shalt bear it.

[2.] None shall bear it with thee, to ease thee of a part of the weight, Gal. 6:5. There will be no relieving out of the flames, so there will be none that will be so kind as to bring a drop of water to cool the tongue in it, Ezek. 16:24. The whole weight shall lie upon thyself. Thou alone, and not another with thee, shalt bear it.

Wherefore consider what ye do. Be wise, sinners, and repent: For except ye repent, ye shall perish. The sound of the Lord's word goes away, and dies out as other sounds: but it liveth and abideth for ever in its efficacy, for the salvation or condemnation of those that hear it. So death and life are set before you, the blessing and the curse. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.

HOW THE SACRAMENTS BECOME EFFECTUAL MEANS OF SALVATION

1 COR. 12:13.—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.

I COME now to handle the questions in the Catechism concerning the sacraments. And the first of these is that touching the efficacy of these holy ordinances, which is one of the doctrines of this text, in which the apostle explains and confirms the doctrine of the mystical union betwixt Christ and his people from the two sacraments.

I explained this text at large, when speaking of the mystical union from it*. I shall only consider it now, in so far as it relates to the sacraments. And so there is,

1. The number of the sacraments of the new Testament. These are two, viz. baptism, 'we are all baptized,' &c. and the Lord's Supper, called here drinking; the denomination being taken from the cup, as it is called breaking of bread, the name being taken from the bread therein used, Acts 2:42. The former is the sacrament of our initiation into Christ, and union with him; the other, of our nourishment in, and communion with him.

2. The efficacy of these sacraments. They are effectual to salvation in those in whom they have their effect, they being united to Christ into one body, and partaking more and more of his Spirit, in those ordinances respectively which so secures their salvation from sin, and wrath too.

3. To whom they are effectual. Not to all, but to believers only, We all, viz. who are members of Christ, ver. 11.

4. How they become effectual. Their efficacy is not from themselves, nor from the administrator, but from the Spirit of Christ. By one

Spirit are we all baptized, &c. So their efficacy depends on the operation of the Holy Ghost in and by them; and to this is presupposed the blessing of Christ, since the Holy Spirit does not work with means unblessed by Jesus Christ.

The purport of the text may be summed up in the following doctrine, viz.

DOCT. 'The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them.'

Here let us consider,

I. That the sacraments are means of salvation.

II. Wherein lies the efficacy of the sacraments, or when may it be said that the sacraments are effectual means of salvation.

III. To whom are they effectual? or in whom have they their efficacy?

IV. Whence is their efficacy?

V. Conclude with some inferences.

I. I shall shew, that the sacraments are means of salvation. For clearing of this, we shall enquire,

1. What is that salvation which the sacraments are said to be means of? It is the whole salvation purchased by Jesus Christ for the elect; which consists of two parts. (1.) Salvation from sin, Matth. 1:21. 'He shall save his people from their sins.' Sensible sinners look on sin as the mortal disease of the soul; and to be saved from it in the guilt and power thereof, they will account the great salvation, as indeed it is. (2.) Salvation from wrath, under which all must perish that partake not of Christ's salvation, 1 Thess. 1:10.—'Jesus which delivereth from

the wrath to come.' This is the warding off the blow of justice, the stroke of death eternal, from the neck of a poor creature. Both these parts make it a great salvation, the greatest that a poor sinner is capable of, Heb. 2:3. And this salvation is so absolutely necessary, that it is no wonder to see a sinner inquiring after the means of it.

2. What a mean of salvation is? A mean has a relation to an end, and is that which is used to bring about the end. And a mean of salvation is any thing appointed of God, in the use of which he carries on the salvation of his people. Thus all divine institutions in the church are means of salvation, that being the common end of them all, Matth. 28:20. Among these the most eminent are, the word, sacraments, and prayer. Prayer has a relation to both, and is to be mixed with them. The difference betwixt the two former is,

That the word is the mean of conversion, and the sacraments the means of confirmation: so the word is the leading, and the sacraments are the subsequent means of salvation. The word is first to have its effect, then the sacraments have theirs on the soul, 1 Cor. 3:5 with Rom. 4:11.

Now, that the sacraments are such means of salvation appears,

1. From the Lord's appointing them for that end to be used, Acts 2:37, 38. 'Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' 1 Cor. 10:16. 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' And in that communion lies the safety of our souls for time and eternity.

2. From the saving effects which they have on the souls of God's people rightly using them. This is a sufficient testimony to their

being such means, and proper means, Acts 8:39 and 2:42. &c.

II. Quest. Wherein lies the efficacy of the sacraments, or when may it be said, that the sacraments are effectual means of salvation?

The efficacy of a mean is its reaching the end for which it is appointed. If it fall short of that, it is ineffectual. The efficacy of a reproof lies in its reforming the party, and of meat in its nourishing the body. Now, the end of the sacraments being to represent, seal, and apply, Christ and his benefits to the soul, the efficacy of the sacraments lies in their reaching these ends; and then are they effectual, when they not only represent, but seal and apply, Christ and his benefits to the receiver, Rom. 4:11. 1 Cor. 12:13. 1 Pet. 3:21. In a word, it lies in effectual obsignation and application of Christ and his benefits. And when they reach not these ends, they are not effectual.

Now, sometimes these effects of the sacraments are so lively and evident, that the soul perceives them, as the eunuch did, Acts 8:38 when he went on his way rejoicing. Sometimes they are not discerned by the believer, though really they are wrought in him, as it was with the two disciples going to Emmaus, in another case, Luke 24. The following are signs of this efficacy.

Sign 1. The soul's cleaving more closely to the hope of the covenant than before, going out of itself more to Jesus Christ and his righteousness. This being the consequent of the sacraments, is an evidence of the obsignation, Phil. 3:3.

Sign 2. More solid tenderness with respect to sin and duty, and longing to be rid of the body of sin and death. This is a sign of the application, Rom 6:4 and 8:23. For nearness to Christ is the cause of distance from sin.

III. Quest. To whom are the sacraments effectual? or in whom they have their efficacy?

1. Not to all who partake of them. Simon was baptized, but continued in the gall of bitterness and the bond iniquity, Acts 8:13, 23. Men may partake of the Lord's supper unworthily. The apostle tells us how highly some were advanced in respect of sacramental privileges, with whom God was not well pleased, 1 Cor. 10:1–5. And sad experience bears witness to this truth.

2. It is effectual to believing receivers, as to the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:37, 39. Mark 16:16. 'He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.' It is with the sacraments as with the word, Heb. 4:2. 'The word did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.' But this is not to exclude infants from the efficacy of baptism, since they are not capable of actual believing; but they having the spirit of faith abiding in them, baptism has its effect on them.

IV. Quest. Whence is the efficacy of the sacraments?

Negatively, 1. It is not from any virtue in themselves that these blessed effects are produced. God has put a power of nourishment in our meat, and of warming in our clothes; but no power of working grace either in the water of baptism, or bread and wine in the Lord's supper. So the work wrought will never confer grace. The scriptures deny this power to the sacraments themselves, 1 Pet. 2:21. 'Baptism doth now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' And many thousands are partakers of the sacraments, who yet never partake of the grace of God, as Simon. These pools will never prove healing, if there be not a moving of the waters from a superior cause.

2. It is not from the piety nor intention of the administrator neither. The holiness and best qualifications that ever were in a minister cannot make them effectual; let them burn and shine with light and life in the administration, they cannot make them effectual to one soul, 1 Cor. 3:6, 7. 'I have planted (says Paul,) A polios watered; but

God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.' The efficacy of God's ordinances depends not on men, the administrators, either as to the making or marring their efficacy, Phil. 1:16, 17, 18. 'The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and therein do I rejoyce, yea, and will rejoyce. They may be employed in saving others, who are castaways themselves.

Positively, 1. The efficacy of the sacraments depends on the blessing of Christ, as the cause without which they could have no efficacy, for as much as the Spirit of Christ will not work by means unblessed, Matth. 15:9. 'In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.' But Christ has blessed these ordinances, first, and then the Spirit works in them and by them. Now, this blessing of Christ is contained in the institution of the sacraments; which comprehends two things, here called Christ's blessing.

(1.) A command authorising the use of these ordinances. (2.) A promise of benefit by them to the worthy receivers, Matth. 28:19, 20 and 26:26, &c.

2. It depends on the working of the Spirit in them and by them on the souls of the receivers, as the efficient cause, 1 Cor. 12:13. The Spirit comes along with them, and renders them effectual to his own.

I shall shut up all with a few inferences.

Inf. 1. Hence learn to prize the sacraments, and behold the dreadful nature of the sin of slighting them. They are means of salvation, and therefore ought to be dear to all who would partake of salvation. Those who slight the means, undervalue the end, the great salvation. Did many amongst us consider this, they durst not so easily live without the word or sacraments, as they do, Luke 7:30.

2. Rest not on the sacraments. They are but means, which are not effectual to every one that receives them. Many receive them both who never receive Christ; but for all that they wear Christ's badge, they work the devil's work. And it is not your receiving them, but receiving benefit by them, that will be a good plea in the end, Luke 13:26, 27.

3. Look more to Christ's institution, and promise accompanying it, with respect to the sacraments, and less to men who have a commission to administer them, if ye would not mar your benefit by the ordinances. It is lamentable to think, that where the minister's commission cannot be quarrelled, and Christ's institution is observed, many nevertheless are so weak, as to be frightened from God's ordinance with scruples about the administrators, as if the Spirit of God could not be expected to work with Christ's institutions, unless they be in the hands of such and such ministers. This absurd and sinful practice prevails too much at this day, as if the efficacy of the sacraments depended on the administrators.

4. Lastly, Be concerned for the working of the Spirit in all ordinances, and particularly in the sacraments; for without that they can have no effect. When ye bring your children to baptism, and when ye come to the Lord's table, be concerned, and earnestly wrestle and pray for it. Let it be at these seasons the matter of your exercise, that the Lord may accompany these solemn ordinances with divine life and power unto you, and may excite your graces unto a vigorous and lively exercise, without which they will be utterly ineffectual to you.

THE NATURE OF THE SACRAMENTS

ROM. 4:11.—And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had yet being uncircumcised.

THIS text discovers the nature of a sacrament, in the description the apostle gives us of circumcision, which Abraham received. In which consider,

1. The sacrament itself which the apostle treats of, circumcision, which was the initiating seal of the covenant under the Old Testament, and has been succeeded by baptism under the New.
2. The author of it. Abraham invented it not, but received it from the Lord, whose institution it was, Gen. 17:10; 'This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised;'^{*} even as the apostle says, 1 Cor. 11:23; 'I have received of the Lord, that, which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, &c.
3. The parts of it; an external sign, the cutting off of the foreskin; an invisible grace, the righteousness of faith.
4. The uses and ends of it: it was appointed to be a sign and a seal too, not nakedly signifying, but exhibiting and applying spiritual blessings.

Lastly, The subject of it: a believer, one to whom the righteousness of faith belonged. Such a person was Abraham, and such are all who truly believe in Christ.

The doctrine of this text is,

DOCT. 'A sacrament is an holy ordinance, instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.'

Here we are to consider,

I. The word sacrament.

II. The author of the sacrament.

III. The parts of a sacrament.

IV. Shew what is the sacramental union of these parts, or wherein it lies.

V. Who are the subjects of the sacraments, for whom they are appointed of God.

VI. What are the general uses and ends of the sacraments.

VII. Deduce some inferences.

I. Let us consider the word sacrament. Of which two things are to be noted. (1.) That it properly signifies a military oath, an oath taken by soldiers, whereby they bound themselves solemnly to their prince or general, to obey orders, and not to desert their colours. And some say this oath was mutual. (2.) That it is not a scripture word; not being used in any of the two languages in which the scripture was written, but a Latin word originally. But the church has made use of it to signify those ordinances which are the signs and seals of the covenant of grace; and that warrantably, because the things thereby signified are found in scripture, though not the word itself. For by the sacraments we are obliged to the spiritual warfare under the conduct of Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, to whom we engage ourselves by them, and he also engages himself to us for our salvation.

II. The author of the sacraments is the Lord Jesus Christ, as King and head of his church. Man neither made, nor can make a sacrament, but the Lord only. For, (1.) He only is the author of the word of promise, and of the covenant: who then but he can make the seals thereof? (2.) The sacraments are a part of religious worship, which belongs only to God to appoint, Matth. 15:8; the Lord Jesus is the Author them, by his instituting of them. They are instituted by himself, Matth. 28:19, 20; 'Go ye and teach all nations (says he to his

disciples), baptising them 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,' 1 Cor. 11:23; 'I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread,' &c. It is the word of institution that makes the sacrament, which consists of a command to use the rite, and a promise of grace annexed to the right use of it.

III. Let us consider the parts of a sacrament. These are two.

1. An outward and sensible sign used according to Christ's own appointment, which is something that we can see with our eyes, or perceive by our bodily senses. These are of two sorts. (1.) Signifying things. Such are the water in baptism, and the bread and wine in the Lord's supper. (2.) Signifying actions; for the sacramental actions, being significant, as well as the things, are signs, and sensible signs, which we may see with our eyes. Such are the sprinkling of the water in baptism, and the breaking, giving, and receiving, of the bread and wine in the Lord's supper.

I say, used according to Christ's appointment; and therefore these same things and actions are not sacramental when otherwise used, as when water is sprinkled, or bread broken, without those other circumstances appointed by Jesus Christ in these ordinances. For where there is no divine institution, there is no sacrament.

2. An inward and spiritual grace thereby signified, Matth. 3:11; 'I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire,' 1 Pet. 3:21; 'The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christy,' Rom. 2:28, 29; 'For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is

one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.' The signs are earthly, to be perceived with the bodily eyes; the thing signified heavenly, to be perceived only by faith. The former tends to the body, the latter to the soul. The one is received corporeally, the other spiritually.

The thing signified by the sacramental signs is Jesus Christ himself with all his saving benefits, Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 11:24; 'This is my body,' &c. Not Christ's benefits without himself; for as there is no washing with water, without application of the water itself, and no nourishment by bread and wine, without eating and drinking of it; so there is no partaking of Christ's benefits without partaking of himself, Heb. 3:14. Rom. 8:32. So unbelievers can have no saving benefit by the sacraments; for Christ himself is the kernal of the sacraments; and wherever he comes, he brings all saving benefits along with him, Rom. 8:32 even the purchase of his death.

The sum of these saving benefits ye have in that word, 1 Cor. 1:30. 'Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; which comprehends all that is necessary for the cure of the case of any poor sinner.

IV. I proceed to shew, what is the sacramental union of these parts, or wherein it doth lie. There is an union of the parts of the sacraments, and without it they could not be accounted parts of the sacraments. It is by virtue of the union betwixt the signs and the thing signified, that the one gets the name of the other, Gen. 17:10. 1 Cor. 11:24, 25. 'This is my body, This cup is the new testament in my blood:' yea, and the effects of the one are ascribed to the other, Tit. 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.' Now, this is not a natural or local union; for in respect of place they are as far distant as heaven and earth: but it is a relative union, consisting in that spiritual relation

that is between the sign and the thing signified, made by virtue of Christ's institution, whereby the signs signify or represent, seal, and exhibit to the worthy receivers the thing signified.

V. I come to shew, who are the subjects of the sacraments for whom they are appointed of God. They are those, and those only, who are within the covenant, Rom. 15:8. 'Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.' Exod. 12:48. 'When a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.' For the seals of the covenant can belong to none but those who are in it. So they have a right to them before God who are savingly within the covenant, and those a right before the church who are in it by a credible profession. Believers and their seed have a right to baptism; but only Christians come to years have a right to the Lord's supper, 1 Cor. 11:28. But let a man examine himself, &c.

VI. Lastly, I come to shew, what are the general uses and ends of the sacraments. The principal uses and ends are threefold.

1. To be holy signs to signify and represent Christ and his benefits to the believer, to be discerned by faith, Rom. 4:11. There is a fitness in them for this end, there being a plain resemblance betwixt the signs and the thing signified; whereby the signs do bring into their minds, and do clearly represent to a spiritual discerner the thing signified. And thus they strengthen faith, and all other graces in a believer; as seeing helps believing.

2. To be heaven's public seals to seal the covenant, Rom. 4:11. It is by them that God solemnly ratifies and confirms the covenant with believers. The covenant is held out in the word to be embraced by all to whom it comes: by believing we enter into the covenant; by the sacraments God declares it to be a bargain, as one does by subscribing a contract, and sealing it. And thus also they strengthen

faith and all other graces; and oblige the believer to obedience, as one in covenant with God, Rom. 6:3.

3. To be means of applying and exhibiting Christ and his benefits to the believer, 1 Cor. 11:24. So that with the sacramental signs, in the right use of them, is joined the possession and actual enjoyment of the thing signified: 'This is my body, take eat.' As one is put in possession of houses or land, by earth or stone given them, according to law, upon a disposition: so is the believer made partaker of Christ, and solemnly put in possession of all his saving benefits, by these means. The less principal end of the sacraments is to be badges of our Christian profession, to distinguish men from those that are without the church, Eph. 2:11, 12. 'Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision, by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the common-wealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.'

I shall conclude this discourse with some inferences.

Inf. 1. Great is the privilege of the covenant, and the benefits thereof, which God has thus appointed to be sealed. Seals are not used in small matters, but in those of great importance; how great then must those be which heaven seals?

2. Our gracious God has shewn great kindness to, and concern for the welfare and comfort of poor sinners coming to him through his Son. Though his word be firmer than heaven and earth, he remembers our frame, that we are guilty, and therefore fearful and suspicious creatures; and, for our ease, that we may the better trust him, has appointed seals of his benefits promised in his covenant.

3. Great is the sin of slighting the sacraments, and neglecting to partake of them. God appended seals to the covenant of works, viz. the tree of life, and that of the knowledge of good and evil. He also

appointed seals to the covenant of grace, under the old dispensation, and under the new too. So divine wisdom has seen them always necessary. What an affront to the wisdom and kindness of God, and his covenant, must the slighting of them then be?

4. Lastly, Great is the sin of abusing and profaning the sacraments, 1 Cor. 11:27, 'Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink, this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.' The unconverted profane the seals of heaven by setting them to a blank, where there is no covenant. The saints in a dead and sleepy frame do also profane them, while they are in no capacity to discern what they are appointed to represent, seal, and apply. O then use the sacraments in faith, according to Christ's! institution, and seek his blessing upon them, that the benefits, thereby sealed may become effectually yours.

THE NUMBER OF THE SACRAMENTS, AND THE NATURE OF BAPTISM

1 COR. 12:13.—For by one Spirit we are all baptised—and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

MATTH. 28:19.—Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

THE first of these texts, as before explained, holds out the number of the sacraments of the New Testament; and from thence we may draw this doctrine, viz.

DOCT. 'The sacraments of the New Testament are, baptism, and the Lord's supper.'

That this, and only this, is the number of the sacraments, we have the following evidences.

1. These were instituted by the Lord Jesus, and no more, Matth. 28:19 and 26:26–28. No other bear the stamp of divine institution. And none can shew any other holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.

2. These two fully answer the necessities of the saints in the case of sacraments. Two witnesses are sufficient to one deed, and the great deed and grant of the covenant are sufficiently witnessed unto by these. What more is there for God's elect to expect in this world, but these two things, that they receive life and nourishment, that they be taken into the covenant, and kept in it? Baptism is the sign of the one, and the Lord's supper of the other. The one is the sacrament of our ingrafting into Christ, and the other of our nourishment in him. And there is no special grace whatsoever, but what is signified and sealed by them.

3. The same was the number and nature of the ordinary sacraments of the Old Testament. They were no more but circumcision and the passover. And plain it is, that the New Testament dispensation is not more full of external rites and ceremonies than the Old one was. So that the Papists' seven sacraments compared with the two Jewish ones, must needs shew Popery to be vastly distant from the simplicity of the gospel. Circumcision was the initiating sacrament then, as baptism is now, signifying the putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh, Col. 2:11; as baptism the washing of them away, Acts 22:16; the passover signifying Christ crucified, 1 Cor. 5:7; as the sacrament of the supper also, Matth. 26:26. First they were to be circumcised, and afterwards to keep the passover; and so first to be baptised, and afterwards to communicate in the Lord's supper, but no otherwise. Circumcision was never reiterated, but the passover frequently.

4. Lastly, As the apostle, in our text, makes these two the bonds of Christian communion, and no more; so he reduces the extraordinary Jewish sacraments, in their uses and ends, to those of our two sacraments. The being under the cloud, and passing through the Red Sea, he calls their being baptised, 1 Cor. 10:2. Their eating of the manna, and drinking the water of the rock, he calls their eating of the same spiritual meat, and drinking the same spiritual drink, as we do in the Lord's supper, ver. 3, 4.

From this point I shall draw a few inferences,

Inf. 1. Good and gracious is our God to his church and people, under the gospel in a special manner, who has instituted two, and but two sacraments, and these easy and clear. Here we have enough for the confirmation of our faith of the promises; and we have no reason to say we are under a heavy yoke. Here none of our blood is to be shed, but Christ's blood is most clearly represented as shed for us.

2. The five sacraments which the Papists have added to our Lord's two, are but bastard sacraments, not the badges of Christ, but of Antichrist. These are, confirmation, penance, orders, marriage, and extreme unction.

Confirmation is the bishop's anointing of the baptised with chrism in the forehead, in the form of a cross, with this form of words, 'I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.' This has no manner of divine institution, nor is it at all to be found in the scriptures; and derogates from the sacrament of baptism.

Penance is repentance, discovering itself by external evidences. The matter of this pretended sacrament, they say, lies in contrition of heart, auricular confession, and satisfaction; the form of it in absolution by the priest, as a judge, pardoning their sin, not ministerially, only declaring it. But here is no visible sign at all, necessary to contradistinguish the sacramental signs from the word.

No sign at all is administered to the penitent; no promise annexed to a sensible sign here: therefore no sacrament. Besides auricular confession is not instituted at all by the Lord. And judicial pardon is blasphemous, ministerial declaration of pardon being only competent to ministers, John 20:23.

Orders is the ordination of church-officers; which is instituted, but not to be a sacrament, it having no promise of saving grace annexed to it. 1 Tim. 4:14 speaks not of saving grace, but of the official gift, viz. authority to preach.

Matrimony has nothing of a sacrament in it, since it has no visible sign appointed by Christ, no promise of saving grace annexed to it, and is common to all the world as well as the church. It is misgrounded on Eph. 5:32 where their corrupt translation reads a great sacrament.

Extreme unction is the priest's anointing the eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, reins, and feet of a person thought to be at the point of death, with olive-oil, consecrated by a bishop, using these words, 'By this holy oil, and his tender mercy, God forgive thee all thy sins.' It is built on Jam. 5:14 where the miraculous cure of diseases is spoken of.

3. See the bent of corrupt nature in meddling with God's institutions, the abominations of Popery, and the great mercy of our deliverance from it. We can never be enough thankful to God for the reformation from that grand apostasy, idolatry, and superstition. We ought to hold firmly what we have attained, and stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, that we be not again entangled with any yoke of bondage. Let us steadfastly adhere to all the ordinances and institutions of our Lord Jesus Christ, and vigorously oppose, in our respective stations and places, all deviations from the same, from whatever quarter they may come, or under whatever specious pretexts they may be introduced or recommended. To the law and to the testimony let us bring them; and receive and practise

nothing in the worship and service of God, but what is enforced with a Thus saith the Lord. And let us ever remember the extreme danger of all usages and innovations not contained in or authorised by the written word; and therefore let us from the heart abhor them.

In the second text we have the institution of baptism. And herein consider,

1. The ordinance itself; baptising in the name of the holy blessed Trinity. This is expressly instituted by Jesus Christ: Go ye therefore, and baptize, &c.
2. The administrators of baptism; ye apostles, and your successors, in 'teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded. And lo I am with you alway even to the end of the world.'
3. The subjects of baptism; all nations which are taught Gr. disciplined, made disciples of Christ. First, they are to be disciplined, and then baptised.

The doctrine of the the text is,

DOCT. 'The sacrament of baptism is instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ.'

To open the nature of this sacrament, let us consider,

- I. The signifying thing in it.
- II. The signifying action.
- III. The particular uses and ends of baptism.
- IV. The subjects of baptism, or those to whom it is to be administered.
- V. The efficacy of it.

VI. The necessity of it.

VII. Deduce a few inferences.

I. Let us consider the signifying thing in this sacrament. There is a fourfold baptism spoke of in scripture. (1.) The baptism of light, which is taken for the doctrine, Acts 18:25. (2.) The baptism of blood, which is martyrdom, Matth. 20:22, 23. (3.) The baptism of the Spirit, which is the pouring out of the Spirit, Matth. 3:11. (4.) The baptism of water, which is baptism properly so called. So,

The signifying thing in baptism is water, Acts 8:38, 39. Eph. 5:26. And there is no matter as to the water, whether it be fountain water, or river-water, providing only it be pure clean water, Heb. 10:22. And it is an abominable practice of the Papists to add oil, salt, and spittle, to the water in baptism.

Here I shall shew,

1. What is signified by the water in baptism.
2. What is the resemblance betwixt water and the thing signified by it.

First, What is signified by the water in baptism?

1. The blood of Jesus Christ, Rev. 1:5.
2. The Spirit of Jesus Christ, Tit. 3:5. Isa. 44:3.

Secondly, What is the resemblance betwixt these? There is a sweet resemblance betwixt water, and the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ; the due consideration whereof shews the excellency of the grace exhibited in baptism.

1. Water is a common thing, to be had freely by all those who take it: it is what the poor as well as the rich have access to. So the blood and

Spirit of Christ are free to all who will receive the same offered in the gospel, Isa. 55:1. Christ is not a sealed and closed, but an open fountain, for souls to wash in, Zech. 13:1. Cant. 2:1. And however unclean one be, he is welcome to this water, 1 Cor. 6:9, 10, 11.

2. Water is a cleansing thing, taking out spots, stains, and defilement. The blood of Christ cleanses the defiled conscience, Heb. 9:14. The Spirit of Christ purifies the soul, removing filthy lusts that defile the soul, and so renewing and sanctifying it, Tit. 3:5. And unless we be thus washed, we have no part in Christ.

3. Water is a refreshing thing, when one is thirsty, or scorched with heat. So is the blood of Christ, and the out-pouring of his Spirit, to the thirsty soul, scorched under the flames of wrath, John 6:35.

4. Water is a fructifying virtue. So is Christ's blood and Spirit, making the barren soul fruitful in the fruits of holiness, Isa. 44:3, 4. The soul lies naturally, under the curse, and so can bring forth nothing but the briers and thorns of wickedness. But the blood of Christ sprinkled on the soul, changes the nature of the soul. The soul is naturally dead, and therefore must wither: the Spirit of Christ brings life, and makes the wilderness to blossom as the rose.

5. Water is most necessary, so necessary that we cannot live without it: so the blood and Spirit of Christ are absolutely necessary for our salvation, Heb. 9:23. John 13:8.

6. Lastly, Water must be applied ere it can have its effect: so we must partake of Christ's blood and Spirit, ere our souls can be changed thereby, 1 Cor. 1:30.

II. Let us consider the signifying action in baptism. It is washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Here I shall shew,

1. How this washing with water is to be performed.
2. By whom it is to be performed, according to Christ's institution.
3. What is the meaning of the form of words used in baptism?

First, I am to shew how this washing of water is to be performed. The dipping of the person into the water is not necessary: but baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person. The unlawfulness of dipping is not to be pretended, since it is not improbable that it was used by John, Matth. 3:6 and Philip, Acts 8:38; but seems to have been used in the ancient church, and in some places is used to this day. but baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water, as we do. (1.) Because the apostles, at least sometimes, seem to have baptised that way; as when three thousand were baptised in one day, Acts 2:41; which can hardly be imagined to be done in so short a space of time by dipping; and when some were baptised in the night, as in the case of the Philippian jailor and his family, Acts 16:33. (2.) Because baptising in scripture is used for washing by infusion or sprinkling, as well as immersion, Mark 7:4. Luke 11:38. (3.) Because the thing signified by baptism is called sprinkling, and is represented thereby sufficiently, Heb. 12:24. 1 Pet. 1:2. It is true, we are said to be buried in baptism, Rom. 6:4; but even the sprinkling of the water, as well as dipping, represents that, according to the ancient way of burying, wherein they were not sunk into the earth, but laid on the ground, and the mould cast over them. Besides that in some cases dipping might endanger the life of the baptised, especially in our cold countries.

Secondly, I shall show by whom baptism is to be performed, according to Christ's institution. By a minister of the gospel lawfully called thereto. For to them only belongs the administration of baptism, to whom it belongs to preach the word, our Lord Jesus having knit these together in the institution, Matth. 28:19. They are the stewards of the mysteries of God, 1 Cor. 4:1; into which office none can thrust himself with a good conscience, who is not called

thereto. And it is the perverse opinion of the absolute necessity of baptism, that makes the Papists and others admit others, even women to baptise in case of necessity.

Thirdly, I shall next show what is the meaning of the form of words used in baptism. It denotes baptism to be administrated by virtue of the authority of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but especially that one is baptised into the profession, faith, and obedience of the holy Trinity, for the Greek *en* signifies into the name, not names, to shew the Unity of the Godhead in the Trinity of persons.

III. I proceed to shew what are the peculiar uses and ends of baptism. Besides the general uses and ends of the sacraments, which are common to baptism and the Lord's supper, the particular uses and ends of baptism are these,

1. To be a rite of solemn admission into the visible church. Matth. 28:19. 1 Cor. 12:13; and so to the visible church privileges, Rom. 11:17. It supposes the party to have a right to these privileges before, and does not make them members of the visible church, but admits them solemnly thereto. And therefore it is neither to be called nor accounted christening, i. e. making them Christians: for the infants of believing parents are born within the covenant, and so are Christians and visible church members; and by baptism this right of theirs is acknowledged, and they are solemnly admitted to the privileges of church-membership.

2. To signify and seal to the party saving privileges and benefits for his eternal salvation, which it actually doth in all those to whom it is effectual, though it is not effectual to all. These benefits are,

- (1.) Ingrafting into Christ, or union with him. Gal. 3:27. We are naturally branches of the old Adam, from whom we can derive nothing but sin and the curse. Christ the second Adam is the true vine into which we are ingrafted, or to whom we are united, John 15:5. The Spirit is the ingrafter, who, by the knife of the law cuts us

off from the old stock, Gal. 2:19 and puts us into Christ, winding us up with the band of the covenant of grace, and causing us to knit with him by faith, Eph. 3:17. This is signified and sealed by baptism, while so Christ does solemnly take possession of us, being baptised in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

(2.) Partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace. These benefits signified and sealed by baptism are,

[1.] Remission of sins by virtue of the blood of Christ, Mark 1:4. That as the water washes away the stains of the body, so the blood of Christ washeth off guilt; and God, for the sake of his Son, forgives sin. So the apostle prescribes it for the ease of the troubled souls who were pricked and awakened by his sermon, Acts 2:37, 38. 'Repent and be baptised every one of you (says he), in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins' that so they might be assured of pardon.

[2.] Adoption into the family of God, Gal. 3:26, 27. We are by nature out of God's family: but here God's name is called upon us, and we are visibly taken into the visible family of God; and having his Spirit dwelling in us, we are really taken into the family; which is signified and sealed by baptism.

[3.] Regeneration by the Spirit of Christ, signified by water, Tit. 3:5. The Spirit of Christ in regeneration worketh like water, John 3:5 cleansing the soul from its impurities and making it holy. This is necessary to our salvation, since no unclean thing can enter the New Jerusalem; and is signified and sealed by baptism.

(4.) Resurrection unto life eternal out of the grave by the same Spirit, Rom. 8:11. That baptism has an eye to this, appears from 1 Cor. 15:29. 'Else what shall they do which are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not?' And it is represented by the water's going off the baptised, though more lively by the coming up out of it in dipping.

3. To signify and seal our engagement to be the Lord's, to be his only, wholly and for ever, Rom. 6:4. It is a dedicating ordinance, wherein the party baptised is solemnly given up to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. His ear is bored, that he may be the Lord's servant for ever. He is listed under Christ's banner, to fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh. He renounces sin and Satan, these his old masters, as being dead to sin, that he may live in newness of life. And, in a word, it is a declared acceptance of God's covenant offered in the gospel.

IV. I come to shew, who are the subjects of baptism, those to whom baptism is to be administered. 'Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him; but the infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptised.'

Negatively, (1.) Not any inanimate things, as bells, which the Papists do thereby horribly profaning the seal of God's covenant. (2.) Nor yet infidels, who are without the visible church, and so strangers from the covenants of promise, who therefore can have no right to the seals, while they continue so, Eph. 2:12.

Positively, All those, and those only, who are within the covenant, without distinction of nation, sex, or age. This is clear from the institution, of discipling all nations, and then baptising them. So whosoever they are who come into Christ's school, and are members of his visible church, are to be baptised, and none other. So,

1. Those who are of age whatever they have been before, are to be baptised, upon their making a credible profession of their faith in Christ, and obedience to him: because in that case the church is to look upon them as within the covenant. It is true, if they be not sincere believers, they have not a right to it before God; but their credible profession gives them a right to it before the church. Both of these are plain in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:37, 38; and Peter's hearers, Acts 2:38.

2. The infants of believing parents, or visible church-members, one or both, are to be baptised: because they are to be looked upon as within the covenant, since it runs so, 'I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed,' &c. Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:38, 39; and the benefits of the covenant belong to them, Matth. 19:14; who then can forbid them the Seal of the covenant? They were circumcised under the Old Testament, and the grace of God is not narrower now than it was then. They are comprehended under the institution, as making a part of nations, and are reckoned disciples, Acts 15:10; and so the apostles baptised whole families, as Paul and Silas that of the gaoler, Acts 16:15, 33; and Paul that of Stephanas, 1 Cor. 1:16. And it is sufficient if one of the parents be a church-member, though the other be not, 1 Cor. 7:14.

V. As to the efficacy of baptism, we may observe three things.

1. It consists in effectual sealing and applying Christ and his benefits to the baptised party, 1 Pet. 3:21.
2. It is not effectual to all that receive it, as appears from the case of Simon, who after baptism remained in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, Acts 8:13, 23; and this the unholy lives of many baptised in their infancy do testify.
3. It is not tied to the moment of administration, but though not effectual in the time it is administered, may afterwards be effectual, through the working of the Spirit, John 3:5, 8.

VI. As to the necessity of baptism, two things are to be observed.

1. It is not of absolute necessity to salvation, as if the simple want thereof could hinder salvation; for God has not made baptism and faith equally necessary, Mark 16:16. And circumcision was not to be administered before the eighth day, Gen. 17:12;* though there is no reason to doubt but some Jewish infants died before that time.

2. It is necessary by divine precept, as an instituted means of salvation. So that the contempt of it is a sin, and a great one, that will damn men, unless it be pardoned through the blood of Christ, Luke 7:30; but this contempt cannot be ascribed to the child, before he comes to the years of discretion, and so cannot involve him in guilt; but unto the parents. So that Gen. 17:14; is to be understood of the child come to years.

A few inferences shall conclude this subject.

Inf. 1. Baptism is not to be administered to any person oftener than once. This is plain from the nature of the ordinance, Tit. 3:5; we being but once ingrafted and regenerated.

2. Improve your baptism agreeable to the nature of it, and the ends of its institution. It is a gross neglect, that we are not often putting the question to ourselves, Into what was I baptised? Alas! many make no more use of their baptism rightly, than if they had never been baptised. Though ye were but once baptised, ye should be improving it all your life long, and particularly when you see others baptised.

(1.) Improve it for raising your hearts in thankfulness to God, that ever ye were sealed with the seal of God's covenant, and had his name called on you, while many in the world are utter strangers to the covenants of promise.

(2.) Improve it for your strengthening against temptation, considering that you are the Lord's, not your own, and are under the most solemn and awful engagement to God, to resist the devil, the world, and the flesh; and also drawing strength from the death, and resurrection of Christ, into whom they were baptised, Rom. 6:4.

(3.) Improve it for your humiliation under your sins and miscarriages, considering them as sins against the grace of baptism, and your engagements to God therein; remembering that sins after solemn engagements to the contrary, are highly offensive to God, and

attended with more aggravating circumstances, than if they had never been baptised, and such solemn engagements entered into by you. The vows of God are upon you; break them not, and go not about after vows to make inquiry.

(4.) Improve your baptism to the strengthening of your faith and confidence in Jesus Christ, especially in downcastings under a sense of guilt; for it is a sign and seal of remission, adoption, &c. and so may answer the question to an exercised soul, How can I be put among the children?

(5.) Improve it to the vigorous exercise of, and growth in holiness, since thereby ye are engaged to newness of life, as ye are raised from the dead, Rom. 6:4. Were ye dedicated unto God, does not that say ye should be holy in heart, lip, and life? As God is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of life and conversation; remembering that without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

(6.) Lastly, Improve it to the increase of brotherly love, even love to all the saints, who are all baptised into one body, 1 Cor. 12:13. It is as unnatural for saints not to love one another, or to quarrel with one another, as it is for the members of the natural body to be at war with each other. Then love one another, as Christ hath loved you.*

OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

1 COR. 11:23, 24, 25.—I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner, also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

THESE words afford us the answer to that question, 'What is the sacrament of the Lord's supper!' and declare to us the nature of that holy ordinance which we are now in expectation of, and now falls to be explained? For which we shall consider,

I. The author of it.

II. The signifying things in it.

III. The signifying actions.

IV. The uses and ends of it.

All these particulars are contained in the text and deserve a special consideration.

1. The author of this ordinance is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. It is not founded on man's authority, but on his own authority, who is the only King and Head of his church, ver. 23. I have received of the Lord Jesus, &c. which points out a twofold excellency in it. (1.) A character of divine authority upon it. The elements and actions, though they be mean in themselves, yet have a majesty in them to a spiritual eye, as bearing Christ's stamp on them, and being heaven's broad seal to the covenant. (2.) A holiness in it; it is a holy ordinance, as appointed by

the holy Jesus. The elements, though in themselves common things, are relatively holy, as appointed to represent, seal, and apply Christ and his benefits.

Here I shall shew,

1. When Christ instituted this sacrament,
2. For what time it is to continue.
3. What the words of institution contain.

First, When did Christ institute this sacrament? The same night in which he was betrayed, ver. 23. Yet this does not bind us to that time rather than to another, because that was an accidental circumstance, arising from something peculiar to the first institution and administration. For it could not be sooner, in regard it behoved to be after the passover, which was to be killed in the evening, Exod. 12:6 and eaten that night, ver. 8 which was to be abrogated by this new institution. It could not be later, because quickly after he fell into his enemies' hands. The time of its institution teaches us four things.

1. The most tender care and concern our Lord had and has for his people's welfare and comfort, providing for these just while he was to launch forth into the sea of wrath. Admirable love and tenderness indeed!
2. That it is Christ's dying love-token to his friends, and therefore to be highly prized, and duly improved.
3. That it is of special use to fit the Lord's people for a time of trouble and trial. Now, the disciples were to meet with a storm which they had never seen the like of; and he reserves therefore the best wine till now.
4. That it is of special use to fit his people for grappling with death; the which we may learn from his example.

Secondly, For what time is this sacrament to continue? I answer, Till he come again, and so it is to last to the end of the world. While he is absent, we must make use of it, as a memorial, ver. 25, 26.

Thirdly, What do the words of institution contain? They contain Christ's blessing; which comprehends two things. (1.) A command for the use of this sacrament. (2.) A promise of spiritual benefit by it to the worthy receivers, viz. that they shall partake of Christ's body and blood in the right use of it, ver. 24, 25. Take, eat: This is my body.—This cup is the new Testament in my blood.

II. I proceed to consider the signifying things, or outward elements. These are bread and wine. The bread, ordinary bread, without any determination of what grain it is made, nor whether leavened or unleavened. Our Lord took such bread as came to hand, and so may we without scruple, though decency is to be observed. The wine, as to the colour of it, is also indifferent; and whether a little mixed with water, or unmixed is so too. Necessity and decency must regulate these things, the church being no otherwise tied by divine institution.

Here Let us consider,

1. What is signified by the bread and wine.
2. The resemblance betwixt the signs and the things signified.

First, What is signified by the bread and wine? The body and blood of Christ, ver. 24, 25 even a whole Christ, with all his benefits, forasmuch as the divine nature after the incarnation was never separated from the human, though the soul was separated from the body, and his precious blood from his flesh.

Secondly, The resemblance betwixt the signs and the things signified.

1. Consider the bread and wine separately.

1st, There is a resemblance betwixt the bread and Christ's body.

(1.) Bread is for nourishing natural life: so is Christ's body for nourishment to the soul, John 6:56. 'For (says he), my flesh is meat indeed.' There the hungry may feed, and be nourished and strengthened, to grow up unto eternal life.

(2.) Bread must be prepared ere it can be bread, or fit nourishment for us, the grain ground and baked with the fire. So Christ was grinded betwixt the upper millstone of the Father's wrath, and the nether millstone of the malice of men and devils, and cast into the fiery furnace of justice, that he might be bread to our souls, Psal. 22:14.

(3.) Bread is a common and cheap provision; it is for the poor as well as the rich. Christ's salvation is the common salvation, Jude. 3; free to all who will receive the same, Rev. 22:17.

(4.) Of all provision it is the most necessary. Nothing is so necessary for us as Christ; without him we die, we perish, we all perish, John 6:53. 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.'

(5.) Lastly, It is a sort of food which healthy people will never loath. So is Christ ever sweet to the soul that feeds on him, though distempered souls loath the bread of life.

2dly, There is a resemblance betwixt wine and Christ's blood.

(1.) The wine is squeezed out of the grapes forcibly by the wine-press. Thus was Christ's blood squeezed out of his body, by the wine-press of the Father's wrath, that it might be drink to our souls.

(2.) Wine has a medicinal virtue, Luke 10:34. Christ's blood is the great medicine for the wounds of the soul. There are no wounds so deep, or so hopeless, but an application of Christ's blood will cleanse them, and heal them too.

(3.) Wine is refreshing and strengthening to the body, 1 Tim. 5:23. A draught of this spiritual drink, exhibited to us in the sacrament, and to be received by faith, would make the soul pressed with guilt, and a sense of wrath, to stir as a giant refreshed with wine, John 6:55. 'My blood is drink indeed.'

(4.) Lastly, It is of a cheering virtue, Prov. 31:6. The blood of Christ is that whereof those who are of sorrowful spirits, by reason of guilt, may drink by faith, and forget their sorrow, 1 Pet. 1:8.

2. Consider the bread and wine conjunctly, set before us in the sacrament. There is a threefold resemblance.

1st, There is both meat and drink, bread and wine, in the sacrament. In Jesus Christ we have a full feast for our souls, John 6:56. 'My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.' There is a fulness in him for all our wants, a fulness of merit and of Spirit.

2. The bread and wine are separate in the sacrament. So was Christ's blood separated from his body on the cross for us. Many vents were made in that blessed body by the nails and spear, through which that blood might gush out, for the redemption of an elect world.

3. The bread must be eaten, and the wine drunk, or they will not nourish. So Christ's body and blood must be by faith eaten and drunk, or it will not profit us to our salvation. It is union with him by faith that makes us partakers of his benefits.

III. Let us consider the signifying actions in this sacrament.

First, There are some signifying actions of the administrator about these elements, according to Christ's institution, which, being sacramental, are also significant.

1. Taking the bread, and the cup into which the wine has been poured out, taking them into his hand, ver. 23, 24, 25. Nothing is more distinctly mentioned than this, Matth. 26:26, 27. 'Jesus took bread,

and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.' Whence it is evident, that it is taken to be consecrated. And this represents the Father's chusing and designing the Son to be Mediator, Psal. 89:19. 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.' So in this action we may see, (1.) Man perishing for want of spiritual food, Adam and all his posterity starving in their souls, and so their case crying for bread. (2.) God in his eternal love destinating bread for a starving world. (3.) The Son of God, as the party on whom the lot fell, to be bread for them. Behold the bread the Father took, Isaiah 42:1. 'Behold my servant whom I uphold.' He was God's choice, and shall he not be ours?

2. Consecrating of the elements, ver. 24, 25. The consecrating of the bread and wine apart is reckoned to be an accidental circumstance in the first administration, agreeable to the custom of the country where it was done, not obliging us, whose custom it is to bless all together, more than unleavened bread, &c. Nor does there appear any mystery further in the former than the latter.

Here consider,

(1.) How the elements are consecrated. By the word of institution, thanksgiving and prayer, they are consecrated, or set apart from common use, ver. 23, 24, 25. Our Lord Christ had power of himself to institute the ordinance, and did so, and blessed it, and solemnly gave thanks over it. The institution stands in the word, which therefore we read on that occasion, and, according to his example, pray over it with thanksgiving. The Popish consecration, by muttering over these words, This is my body, hit not the mark; for these words, This is my body, were uttered by our Lord after the consecration.

(2.) What is the effect of the consecration on the elements? Not a real change of them into the body and blood of Christ. This destroys the

nature of a sacrament, leaving no sensible sign. It is contrary to the institution, where Christ's body was sitting at the table, and reached the disciples bread and wine. It is contrary to the doctrine of Christ's suffering once, his ascension, sitting at God's right hand, and coming again not till the last day. And so it is contrary to sense and reason.

Christ said indeed, This is my body, i. e. signifies my body, as the lamb is called the Lord's passover, Exod. 12:11. It is by these words the Papists will have the bread changed into the real natural body of Christ. But these words suppose it to be Christ's body before, since a thing cannot be truly said to be what it is not. So it is no otherwise Christ's body, but sacramentally.

The true effect is a relative change on the elements, so that they are no more to be looked upon as common bread and wine, but the sacred symbols of Christ's body and blood. So they are changed in respect of their use, being set apart for this holy use.

(3.) The signification of this sacramental action. It represents the Father's setting apart and consecrating his own Son to, and investing him in, the Mediatory office. So Christ is said to be sealed, John 6:27; sanctified and sent, chap. 10:36; and anointed to his office, Isa. 61:1. So in this a believer may see these three things. (1.) The Father calling Christ to the Mediatory office, Heb. 5:4, 5; to do and to die for the perishing elect. (2.) The Son's accepting of the call, though he knew how hard the work was, Psal. 40:7. (3.) Christ completely furnished for all the ends of his mediation, actually entered on the office. The Father blessed him, and sent him on the work, and he goes about it, Isa. 61:1.

3. Breaking of the bread, ver. 24. This is an essential rite of this sacrament, it being sometimes called by this very name, Acts 20:7. It signifies the breaking of Christ's body for us, and consequently the shedding of the blood. In the sacrament there is not a word of pouring out the wine, though no doubt it was done: for the shedding of Christ's blood is sufficiently represented by breaking of his body.

His body was broken to the shedding of his blood in his circumcision, in his soul-sufferings to the sweating of blood, in the plucking off his hair, Isa. 50:6 in his scourging, John 19:1 crowning with thorns, and being smitten on the so crowned head, and in his crucifixion. And these his sufferings point to all the rest.

4. Giving of the bread, and then the wine, to the communicants, ver. 24, 25. This signifies Christ's giving himself, with all his benefits, to the worthy receiver, which is really done in the right use of this sacrament. This is plain from the words, Take eat, &c.

Secondly, There are signifying actions of the communicants.

1. Taking of the bread and wine with the hand, ib. This signifies their receiving a whole Christ, as offered in the word, and exhibited in the sacrament, closing with him by faith.

Eating and drinking. The Papists destroy this last as to the people, with-holding the cup from them, contrary to Christ's express command, Matth. 26:27. 'Drink ye all of it.' These actions signify their feeding spiritually on Christ's body and blood, and uniting with him by faith.

These solemn sacramental actions not being accompanied with the things signified, namely, the duties, make them a solemn mocking of God, which makes unworthy communicating so great a sin.

IV. I proceed to consider the particular uses and ends of this sacrament. Besides the general ends of this sacrament, common to the other also, to wit, (1.) To be a signifying sign, (2.) A sealing sign, (3.) An exhibiting sign, of Christ, and his benefits to believers; the particular ends of it are,

1. To be a memorial of the death of Christ till he come again, ver. 24. And this is to be considered two ways, (1.) As a memorial of it before the world, 1 Cor. 11:26 as Joshua set up the twelve stones. Hereby we keep up a standard for Christ, and openly avouch his dying, and our

faith of it. (2.) As a memorial before our own eyes, to revive, quicken, and preserve the affectionate remembrance of his death in our hearts. This respects Christ's honour and our duty.

2. To be a badge of and confirm our union and communion with Jesus Christ himself, 1 Cor. 10:16. What nearer union do we know on earth, than that betwixt us and our food, which incorporates with our substance? So this sacrament signifies, seals, and confirms our union and communion with Christ, as eating his flesh and drinking his blood. This respects our privilege.

To be a spiritual feast for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. Take eat, &c. For therein believers are made partakers of his body and blood, since they are really exhibited in this ordinance to the faith of the believer. They partake of it not after a corporal and carnal manner, eating and drinking of that blessed body and blood with the mouths of their bodies, but spiritually and most really by faith. This respects our benefit.

4. Lastly, To be a public testimony of our communion with all saints, members of the same body, 1 Cor. 10:17. This respects the whole church of Christ, and the duties they owe to one another as members of the same body.

I shall now conclude this subject with an inference or two.

Inf. 1. Hence we may see the unparalleled goodness and bounty of a gracious God to his people, in covering a rich table for them in this wilderness, stored with the best meat and drink for their refreshment and nourishment in their pilgrimage-state, till they arrive at their father's house in the heavenly Canaan. With what an enlarged appetite ought they to come to and partake of this royal feast, designed only for those who are the King's friend's! They should feed upon it in the exercise of faith, love, desire, wonder, and joy. They should welcome every opportunity that presents itself, to feast with

their Redeemer, and give suitable reception to the entertainer, and the entertainment he provides.

2. This holy sacrament is children's bread. For none but gracious souls are capable of managing it to their own advantage. How shall they remember him who never knew him? declare their union with him, who are not divorced from their lusts and idols? eat his flesh and drink his blood, who have no appetite for spiritual meat and drink? honour him whom they are daily dishonouring by their profane lives and conversations? None but those who believe in Christ are fit guests for his table. Let all unbelievers be exhorted to receive and embrace Christ as their Saviour, to be clothed with the wedding-garment of his righteousness, and then they will be fit to sit at the King's table.

3. Prepare for this solemn ordinance, if God shall allow us the opportunity. Delay not a moment to give yourselves to the Lord, by receiving and embracing the Lord Jesus as your Saviour and Redeemer, and vouching him as such in his holy sacrament. Let the mortality* and sickness that so generally prevails, excite you to be more vigorous than ever in preparing for this solemn occasion, as perhaps it may be the last many of us may partake of. O then let us prepare to keep the feast in due manner!

OF THE WORTHY RECEIVING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

1 COR. 11:28.—But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

THESE words contain a mean for preventing the great evil which men are apt to fall into with respect to the Lord's supper; and so for our purpose they offer two things to be considered.

1. An evil, a great evil, a heinous evil, which men must use means to prevent; that is, unworthy communicating. But let a man examine himself, &c. This looks back to the preceding verse, wherein the apostle had declared unworthy communicants to be guilty of Christ's body and blood.' But (says he, to prevent this, and that ye may worthily partake) let a man examine himself, &c.

2. The way to be taken to prevent unworthy communicating: Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, &c. A man, every man to whom the gospel comes, and who has access to this ordinance, must examine himself, as a judge does a matter of fact, or goldsmiths metals by the touch-stone, to discern what is true and what counterfeit. And so let him eat; not, And then let him eat, whatever case his soul be in; but let him follow out this duty till he find his soul in some fitness for that ordinance, And so eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

The text affords this doctrine, viz.

DOCT. 'It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's supper, that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience, lest coming unworthily they eat and drink judgment to themselves.'

Here let us consider,

I. What worthiness to partake is.

II. The duty of self-examination necessary for worthy receiving of the Lord's supper.

III. The necessity of this self-examination.

IV. Deduce an inference or two.

I. Let us consider what worthiness to partake is. And,

1. What is meant by it.

2. Wherein it consists.

First, Let us consider what is meant by worthiness to partake.

1. Not a legal worthiness, as if we could deserve it at the hands of God; for 'when we have done all those things which are commanded us, we must say, We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do,' Luke 17:10. Those who are that way worthy in their own eyes, are altogether unworthy: for building their acceptance with the Lord in that ordinance upon their own good qualifications, they shall meet with Simon's entertainment, Acts. 8:20. 'Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money;' for they run quite cross to the end of that ordinance, declaring in effect the death of Christ to be in vain as to them, Gal. 2 ult. 'For if righteousness come by the law, then is Christ dead in vain.'

2. But it is a gospel-meetness and fitness for that ordinance as we are to 'bring forth fruits meet for repentance,' Matth. 3:8 so one communicates worthily, when he is fit for receiving that sacrament according to the rules of the gospel, comes to it in such a manner as Christ bids and welcomes his guests. And much of that lies in coming with a deep sense of our utter vileness and emptiness, Isa. 55:1.

Secondly, Wherein does this worthiness to partake consist? I answer, In two things.

1. In habitual meetness for it, in respect of a gracious state. The soul in the black state of nature is utterly unfit for this ordinance, Psal. 5:5. 'The foolish shall not stand in thy sight, thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' Such a soul is a dead soul, 'dead in trespasses and sins,' Eph. 2:1. And a dead man is not fit for a feast nor a dead soul for the Lord's table, but rather to be buried out of his sight. And from the Lord's table such a one may be expected to come away twice dead.

2. In actual meetness, in respect of a gracious frame. In our addresses to God not only life, but liveliness is requisite, Psal. 80:18. A sleeping man is not fit for a feast neither; and therefore even a true believer may communicate unworthily, as some in the church of Corinth did, 1 Cor. 11:30, 32. So it is necessary that we not only have oil in our vessels, but have our lamps burning if we would be fit, Cant. 1:12.

II. Let us consider the duty of self-examination necessary for worthy receiving of the Lord's supper. And here,

1. The rule or touchstone by which we must examine.
2. The matter we are to examine ourselves about.

First, Let us consider the rule or touchstone by which we must examine.

1. Beware of false ones. (1.) The common guise of the world. It is not enough that ye are like neighbour and other, aye and better than many, like the Pharisee, Luke 18:11. Though an ape be liker a man than a dog is, yet the one is no more a man than the other. Though mere moralists and formalists are liker true Christians than openly profane ones are, yet the former are no more true Christians than the latter. (2.) One's being better than sometime before, 2 Cor. 10:12. One may be like Saul, who got another heart, but not the new heart, 1 Sam. 10:9. (3.) The letter of the law. So did the Pharisee, Luke 18:11; and Paul before his conversion, Rom. 7:9. (4.) The seen practice of the godly, which is but their outside, and so is but an unsafe rule, because you cannot see the principle, motives, and ends of their actions, which are great characteristics, whereby the sincere are distinguished from hypocrites.

2. The only true rule or touchstone in this case is the word of God, Isa. 8:20. 'To the law and to the testimony,' &c. The Spirit of the Lord speaking in the scriptures is the supreme Judge of all questions in religion, whether relating to faith or practice; and the word itself is

the rule by which the decision is made. God hath given us marks in the word, by which one may know whether he be in Christ or not, 2 Cor. 5:17; whether born of God or not, 1 John 3:9; and the like.

Secondly, Let us consider the matter about which we are to examine ourselves. The great thing to be inquired into and examined here, is the state of our souls before the Lord, whether we be in Christ or not, regenerate or not, have true grace or not, 2 Cor. 13:5. This we should examine at all times with respect to death and eternity, because our eternal state depends on our being in a state of grace here. And this is to be examined in respect of the sacrament.

The reason is, This sacrament is not a converting, but a confirming ordinance, as baptism also is, Rom. 4:11. It is a seal of the covenant, and so supposes the covenant entered into before by the party. It is appointed for nourishment, which presupposes life. And if it were not so, what need of self-examination? so let him come, not otherwise. It is the word that is the converting ordinance, not the sacrament, Rom. 10:17; and the nature of excommunication evinces this, 1 Cor. 5:13.

But more particularly, because there are some graces, namely, knowledge, faith, repentance, love, and new obedience, which in a particular manner are sacramental graces, these are to be examined. And,

FIRST, Our knowledge is to be examined, 1 Cor. 11:29.

And here let us consider,

1. What is to be examined concerning our knowledge.
2. How this may be known.
3. The necessity of this.

First, What is to be examined concerning our knowledge.

1. The measure of it, whether competent or not, Hos. 4:6. The nature of this ordinance is such, that it cannot be managed to spiritual advantage, but loss, without a competent measure of knowledge. And this not only ministers should inquire into, but people themselves, after all examination by ministers.

2. The quality of it, whether saving or not, 1 Cor. 13:1. There is a notional, idle, inefficacious knowledge of spiritual things, which leaves men still in their natural darkness, as to any saving uptaking of spiritual things: and therefore it cannot be sufficient to fit men for this ordinance.

Secondly, How may this be known?

1. Competency of knowledge. There may be an ignorance of several not fundamental points of religion, where yet there is a competency of knowledge for this ordinance. But there are two things necessary to it. (1.) An understanding in some measure of the fundamentals of religion, the nature of God, the persons of the Trinity, the fall of man, with the sinfulness and misery of our natural state, the natures and person of Christ, and the way of redemption and salvation by him, our need of him, and of faith as the way how we come to be interested in him. There must be some sensible knowledge of these things, that men be not like parrots, who may be taught to say the creed, without understanding a word of what they say. (2.) An understanding of the nature, use, and ends of this ordinance in particular. Without such a knowledge, there can be no discerning of the Lord's body; for what spiritual thing can one perceive in the ordinance, the nature of which he is ignorant of?

2. Saving knowledge may be discerned by these two marks. (1.) When, by an inward teaching, one is made to see the truth of man's lost state, and his absolute need of Christ, as to be brought out of himself to Jesus Christ wholly for his whole salvation, John 6:45. 'It is written in the prophets, And they shall be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh

unto me.' Here are two things, in one of which, if not both, the knowledge of the most refined hypocrite fails. (2.) When it is influential on the life for sanctification, Matth. 11:29. While notional knowledge leaves always the heart unhumbled, and the life unhallowed, saving knowledge humbles the heart, as it did in the case of Job, chap. 42:5, 6. 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes;' and it sanctifies the conversation, Jer. 22:15, 16. 'Did not my Father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy: then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord.'

Thirdly, Let us consider the necessity of this knowledge.

1. Ignorant persons are utterly unfit to come to this ordinance, and have no right either before God or before the church. They are unconverted, unbelieving sinners, Acts 26:18; ever under the power of some lusts, 1 Pet. 1:14. They are incapable of self-examination, and cannot discern the Lord's body in the ordinance, being ignorant of the mystery of Christ. Therefore a competency of knowledge is necessary.

2. Those destitute of saving knowledge are unfit for this ordinance; and however they may have a right to it before the church, they have none before God. For they are without faith, Isa. 53:11; without repentance, Luke 15:17. And they cannot rightly discern the Lord's body neither in that ordinance, for it must be spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. 2:14. To discern the Lord's body in this ordinance is, in the looking-glass of the elements, to behold with a spiritual eye the body of the Son of God, by death making atonement for sin, and peace with God; which draws the heart to a resting in and on him, as overcome with his glory discerned. They who are void of saving knowledge may imagine it, but cannot spiritually discern it, 1 Cor. 2:8.

SECONDLY, Our faith must be examined. And here let us consider,

1. The necessity of faith in this ordinance.
2. The marks of true faith.

First, Let us consider the necessity of faith in this ordinance.

1. Without true faith one has no right to this ordinance. For unbelievers are not within the covenant of grace, faith being that by which one enters into it, and therefore they have no right to the seal, they are not of the family of heaven, and therefore have no right to the children's bread, John 1:12, 13. Nay, they can please God in nothing they do, Heb. 11:6.
2. Without faith there can be no feeding on Christ. Take, eat, implies a spiritual action, a spiritual feeding. Faith is the hand and mouth of the soul. An unbeliever may feed on the bread of the Lord, as the beasts drank of the water of the rock in the wilderness; but they cannot feed on that bread which is the Lord.

Secondly, Let us consider the marks of true faith.

1. A superlative desire of Christ and his grace, i. e. above all persons and things, Isa. 26:9. Matth. 5:6 for himself as well as his benefits, and not for his benefits only, Psal. 73:25. A desire of a whole Christ, not only for justification, but sanctification too, and that not only as sanctification is the way to make the soul happy, but to conform it to the image of God. It is absolute, without any reserve, condition or exception, Acts 9:6.
2. A receiving and use-making of Jesus Christ in all his offices, John 1:12. Col. 2:6. If sensible of thy absolute need of Christ, and thy own inability to help thyself, thou fleest out of thyself unto the Lord Jesus, renouncing thy own wisdom, righteousness, and will, to be guided by his Spirit, saved by his righteousness alone, and ruled by his law; and if in the course of thy life thou lookest to him for

direction, acceptance with God, and strength in the battle against corruption, then undoubtedly thou believest.

Thirdly, Our repentance must be examined.

Here let us consider,

1. The necessity of repentance in this ordinance.

2. The marks of it.

First, Let us consider the necessity of repentance in this ordinance.

4. Without it there can be no suitable remembrance of a crucified Christ. He is represented there as broken and dying for our sins: and communicating impenitently with a hard heart, looks liker a triumph over Christ's death, than an affectionate remembrance of it. And so it brings upon the person the guilt of the body and blood of the Lord.

2. Without it one cannot expect a sealed pardon, which is the end of the sacrament. God will not seal a pardon to an impenitent soul, nor give Heaven's comforts to insensible sinners, Acts 2:38. As the sun refreshes the earth when softened by rain, but otherwise parches and scorches it; so God revives the spirit of the contrite at a sacrament, while he is full of wrath against impenitent sinners there.

For this cause it is necessary to examine your sins, search them out, and search them thoroughly.

Secondly, Let us view the marks of true repentance.

Ye may know it by this, that the heart is thereby turned from all sin unto God, Psal. 119:59. 'I thought on my former ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.' Ask,

1. Have I turned from sin unto God, or am I yet living in my sins? Acts 26:18.

2. Have I turned from all sin, Ezek. 14:6 from all gross sins in my practice, and from all sin simply, in my heart and affections? Is my heart loosed from sin? and do I hate all sin? Psal. 119:104.

3. If so, why have I done it? Is it only for the wrath annexed to it, or is it not because of the contrariety in it to God's nature and will? Ezek. 36:31.

Lastly, And are the remains of corruption a burden to my spirit, as they are to God's Spirit?

FOURTHLY, Our love must be examined.

And here let us view,

1. The necessity of it in this ordinance.

2. The marks of it.

First, Let us consider the necessity of love to God in this ordinance.

1. Love to God is necessary in it, because therein is held forth the greatest display of God's love in giving his own Son to the death for us. Here is that which of all things may warm the heart most, and make it burn with love to God and Christ.

2. Love to our neighbour is necessary, because God's love, herein represented to us, doth require it, Eph. 4 ult. And if any man love not his neighbour, he does not, he cannot love God. And they that love God, will love his image wherever it is: they will 'love the brethren,' 1 John 3:14 not only the rich, but the poor, even though they may have several faults, and possibly esteem them not so highly; and this not for their being of the same opinion, but precisely because of the grace of God appearing in them, and not because they are like themselves. And they that truly love Christ will love their brethren of mankind, by using proper endeavours to convince them of sin: to persuade them to believe in Christ, if they are yet strangers to him, or to walk

worthy of the gospel, if they have been made partakers of the grace thereof; by associating with the saints, and avoiding all unnecessary commerce with the wicked; and by forgiving personal injuries, and doing good to all men, especially those of the household of faith.

Secondly, Let us view the marks of love to God,

1. True love to God is supreme love. As Moses' rod, when turned into a serpent, swallowed up the rods of the Egyptian magicians; so the love of God will swallow up all affections to the creature, whether lawful or unlawful enjoyments, Luke 14:27; and ever sit exalted above them all.

2. Love to our neighbour will make us wish well to all men, 1 Cor. 5:8; forgive those that have done us wrong, as we desire to be forgiven of God, Matth. 5:23, 24; and love the people of God of whatever denomination, because of the image of Christ appearing in them, 1 John 3:14.

FIFTHLY, Our new obedience must be examined. Without new obedience we cannot pretend to be Christ's disciples, Matth. 11:29. I shall give a few marks of it.

(1.) It is new in respect of the principle it proceeds from, the love of God, Heb. 6:10. (2.) In respect of the end of it, which is God's glory, 1 Cor. 10:31. (3.) It is universal, Psal. 119:6. 'I have a respect unto all thy commandments.' (4.) It is constant, Matth. 24:13. And wherein the believer fails, it is his burden, and it sends him always to the blood of Christ, because of the sinfulness that attends it.

III. I proceed to shew, the necessity of self-examination. It is necessary in two respects.

1. To prevent the sin of coming unworthily to the Lord's table. If we rush on this ordinance without previous examining ourselves, how can we miss of communicating unworthily?

2. To prevent the danger of coming so, which is eating and drinking damnation to one's self. The danger is great, (1.) To the soul, 1 Cor. 11:29. 'For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.' (2.) To the body, ver. 30. 'For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.'

Inf. Examine yourselves, then, as to the state and case of yourselves, in order to prepare for this ordinance. And let none venture upon it without this antecedent exercise, for the danger is very great. And,

1. Be resolute in your self-examination. Resolve to set about this important duty, and resolute to follow it out: because ye will find no small difficulty in it, arising from several causes. 1st, From yourselves, even your own corrupt hearts; and that on several heads. (1.) The ignorance of many makes it difficult. They have not the knowledge necessary to discern the nature or marks of grace. Ye must, then, endeavour the rather to discern these, or any one of them that is given. (2.) A secret respect to some bosomidol which they would fain keep quiet, John 3:20. There are stolen goods, which they have no will to restore, and therefore have no inclination to search them out. But, O consider that 'one thing thou lackest.' (3.) A secret fear that all is wrong with them. Perhaps it is not so. But if it be really so, ye have the more need to get matters set to rights. 2dly, From Satan. He has a singular pique at this duty, and therefore will be ready to muster up all his forces to keep men from venturing on it, or to desist from it; and that [1.] By suggesting unto men the insuperable difficulty of the duty: There is a lion in the way, a lion in the streets. [2.] By telling them, they will mar their own peace with it, but can never come to see the truth of grace, or to assurance by it. [3.] By setting them on to some other duty, which, though good in itself, is then unseasonable, to jostle out that which is then proper and necessary. Satan knows it to be an eminently useful duty, and therefore sets himself in opposition to it, that where matters are not right, they may be kept so; and where persons are in a good state, he may rob them of the comfort of it. On these considerations, ye must

be resolute and active in this exercise. The exhortation to it is doubled, 2 Cor. 13:5. 'Examine your own selves, prove your own selves.'

2. Ye must be impartial in this inquiry. Ye are in this matter judges in your own cause, and under a strong bias to partiality. But the best way is, to take the matter to the highest Judge, with a resolution to know the worst of your case, 1 Cor. 11:31. Be not as Saul, when sent to destroy the Amalekites, who spared Agag and the fattest of the cattle. Overlook not right eyes and right hands. What Solomon says of flocks, may we say concerning your souls, Prov. 27:23. 'Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.' However partial ye may be, God will not be so to you; so that your foolish partiality can do you no good, but a great deal of ill, as it will make you ignorant of your own case, which it is your greatest wisdom and interest to know.

Quest. May one who doubts of his being in the state of grace approach to the table of the Lord? Ans. They whose consciences bear witness, that they do unfeignedly desire Christ and his grace, and to depart from all iniquity, may come notwithstanding of their doubts, which are their weakness, and which they are to struggle against. But if one's conscience witness to him, that he is not clear for Christ as he is offered in the gospel, he cannot come safely, Mat. 5:6 and 11:6. 1 John 3:20, 21.

Let every one therefore, carefully examine himself as to his spiritual state, before he approach to this holy ordinance of the Lord's supper, lest he contract the horrid guilt of trampling on the body and blood of Christ, to which he has a right at the Lord's table.

THE NECESSITY OF SELF- EXAMINATION CONSIDERED.*

2 COR. 13:5.—Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.

THE dispensations of providence begin to be alarming to this secure generation, and look like the beginning of sorrows, in the great mortality prevailing in several places. And the language of such a dispensation is, as is expressed in the text bidding every one examine themselves, whether they be in the faith, &c. In which words we have two things.

1. A necessary duty proposed; and that is, the trial of their state. It is proposed under a double notion, Examine and prove, the call being doubled, because of the weight of the matter. And,

1st, Of self-examination. And here, (1.) Consider the point the apostle would have them put to the trial, Whether ye be in the faith. He knew very well that they professed faith in Christ; but all is not gold that glisters. None but believers, true believers, whose faith worketh by love, being a spiritual vital principle within them, will see heaven: but many take themselves, and others take them, for believers, who yet are not so. (2.) The trial he would have them to make of that point, Examine yourselves. The church of Corinth was a divided church. There was a censorious party among them, conceited of themselves, and despisers of this eminent and highly distinguished apostle. For all the clear demonstrations there were of the Lord's being with him, they sought a proof of Christ's speaking in him, ver. 3. Now, says he, ye are very much abroad, busy examining me, and make much ado for a proof of Christ speaking in me: I would advise you to be more at home, and examine yourselves. Put yourselves to the trial, whether ye are in faith or not. The original word signifies to make such a trial as one does of a thing by piercing through it, whereby he may know what is within, and whether it be sound or not.

2dly, Of self-probation: Prove your own selves, to wit, by trial, as in courts offenders are tried, or they who stand for an office are put on trials to prove whether they be fit for it or not; or rather as goldsmith's try metals, whether by the fire or by the touchstone, whereby they discern the true metal from counterfeit. This is near akin to the former expression, Examine, but is not quite the same. This last speaks the bringing the matter to a point, the pursuing the trial till it should end in a full proof of their state, good or bad. Ye, q. d. seek a proof of Christ speaking in me; pray rest not till ye get a proof of your own state.

2. The weighty ground that makes this duty necessary, most necessary: Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates. Wherein we have,

(1.) The ground itself, Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates. Now, Christ dwells in the heart by faith, Eph. 3:17. Where there is not a vital union with Christ the person is reprobate. There is no union with him but by faith: therefore ye have great need to examine whether ye be in faith or not. Reprobate here is not opposed to elect: for certainly the apostle did not mean to drive them to absolute despair, in case they found themselves naught in the trial; or to persuade them, that if Christ was not in them already, he would never be in them. But it is opposed to upright and genuine, and so denotes a person, or thing, that being tried is found unsound or counterfeit, as Jer. 6 ult. and so useless, absolutely unfit for the ends desired, Tit. 1 ult. and so rejected, Jer. 6 ult.

(2.) The necessity of the knowledge of one's self in this point, Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, &c. Knowledge of one's self is far preferable to the knowledge of other men. Alas! what will it avail men to be raking into the state and case of others, while in the mean time they are strangers to themselves? They do not advert to this great point, how Christ is in them, else they are all wrong for time and eternity.

Observe from the connection, That self-judging is a proper mean to bring people off from rash judging of others. It was not rash judging in Peter, when he pronounced Simon Magus to be in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, who had offered money for the extraordinary power of conferring the Holy Ghost. Neither is it rash judging, to pronounce profane men, scandalous in the habitual course of their lives, to be going in the way to destruction; for the spirit of God by Paul says the same thing, Gal. 5:19–21. 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' But it was rash judging in these Corinthians, to question Christ's speaking in Paul, because in some things he was not so acceptable to them as some others. So it is rash judging, to reject men who conscientiously appear to adhere to the uncontroverted points of practical godliness, because they differ from them in some points controverted among good and holy men. Self-judging would call men home to their own case, so that they would not be at so much leisure to ramble abroad. It would let them see so much evil in themselves, and so much they have need to be forgiven of God, that they would not dare be severe on their brethren, and rigorous on their behaviour, lest the measure they mete to others should be measured to them again. Therefore I cannot but most earnestly recommend this practice of self-judging, which will happily tend to make you low in your own eyes, and preserve you from many miscarriages to and misconstructions of others.

Having thus explained the words, and considered their connection with the preceding context, I shall at this time only observe from them the following doctrine, viz.

DOCT. 'It is a most necessary duty lying on men professing the name of Christ, to examine themselves, whether they are in the faith or not;

and to pursue that examination and trial, till bringing the matter to a proof, they come to a point with reference to that great concern.'

In discoursing from this important doctrine I shall consider,

I. The point to be tried.

II. The trial of the point.

III. Make some improvement.

I. I shall consider the point to be tried. The point concerning which every one is to try himself is, Whether he is in the faith. And here let us consider,

1. What it is to be in the faith.

2. The weight and importance of this point.

First, I am to shew, what it is to be in the faith. To have the true faith, or to be true believers, and to be in the faith, is all one as to the matter; even as to be in Christ, and Christ's being in us, is the same thing in effect. The man that is endowed with the grace of faith, enriched with precious faith, is in the faith: and the faithless, the unbelieving, in whom the grace of saving faith has never been wrought by the Holy Spirit, is not in the faith. But I conceive the expression aims at these three things.

1. The elect's peculiarity of this heavenly gift; hence called 'the faith of God's elect,' Tit. 1:1. It is the peculiar treasure of these happy objects of everlasting love; it is given to none but them; it remains among that blessed party, as a peculiarity of their community. Hence the apostle Peter addressed himself to those to whom he writes, under this character, 'to them that have obtained like precious faith with us,' 2 Pet. 1:1. There is a fourfold faith mentioned in scripture: An historical faith, that devils partake of, Jam. 2:19; a faith of miracles, which one may have, yet want charity, or true saying grace,

1 Cor. 13:2 a temporary faith, which apostates in the end may have had, like the stony-ground hearers, Matth. 13:20, 21. But the faith here to be tried, is the faith that unites to Christ, which none have but those 'ordained to eternal life,' Acts 13:48. It is that whereby a sinner receives and embraces Jesus Christ as a Saviour, and relies upon and trusts in him as his Saviour in particular, for the whole of his salvation, and in virtue of which he lives to God. Now, it is every one's concern to try whether he be in this faith or not.

2. The life of faith. The Christian life is indeed the life of faith. Hence Paul says, 'The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God,' Gal. 2:20. By Adam's eating the forbidden fruit, mankind were led off from the heavenly life into the life of sense, living to gratify their senses, follow their passions, please the vanity of their minds, and the vileness of their affections. Now, God has by Jesus Christ brought in a new way of heavenly life as the road to happiness; and that is the life of faith. Ye should try whether ye are in that road or not. The life of sense is indeed a spiritual death; see whether ye are in the faith, as in the life, the true life of the soul.

3. The operativeness or efficacy of faith; for 'faith worketh by love,' Gal. 5:6. Faith lies inwardly, undiscernible to all the world, but to God and the believer himself. But then it is not a dormant or inactive principle, but spreads its effects outwardly through the whole man. Sound faith works the whole conversation, in every part thereof, into true holiness, brings in an universal respect to the commands of God, and sanctifies the whole man throughout. In vain do they pretend to be possessed of faith, who do not live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. For they to whom God has shewn the good, Christ himself, and have by faith rolled the burden of their salvation upon him, will do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God, as the genuine and never failing fruits of true faith. So ye would consider whether ye be in the faith, which is the way to all other good things.

Secondly, I come to shew the weight and importance of this point. There is nothing about you that can possibly be of greater importance for you to know, and to be clear about. It is the head point, on which all that concerns your eternal salvation depends; and that is a matter of the last consequence to every sinner. We must not stay to enumerate the several particulars. But the weight of it will sufficiently appear, if ye consider, that on it depends,

1. Your union with Christ, and saving interest in him. If Christ dwells in you, it is by faith, Eph. 3:17. This is supposed in the text. We remain branches of the first Adam, without Christ, till we by faith come into him as the true vine. If ye are not in the faith, if ye are not of that household, ye are none of Christ's; ye have no saving interest in him, and so none in his purchase. Ye are yet far from God, strangers to his covenant, and without any special relation to him.

2. Your deliverance from the curse of the law, and your absolution from the sentence of the condemnation ye are born under. Hence the apostle says, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ,' Rom. 5:1. If you have received remission of sin, it has been by faith. Hence the apostle says, 'Be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses,' Acts 13:38, 39. If ye are not in the faith, there is not one of all your sins, from the womb to this day, but is sealed up among God's treasures, and will be brought out against you in due time. The curse of the broken law stakes you down under wrath: For 'he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him,' John 3:36.

3. Your doing any thing acceptable in God's sight: for 'without faith it is impossible to please him,' Heb. 11:6; if ye be not in the faith, ye are reprobate to every good work. Ye can no more serve the true ends of Christianity, than dross can go for gold, or counterfeits pass for current money. For without saving faith, ye are without Christ; and

without Christ ye can do nothing, John 15:5; so that however your works may be in the world's view, some good, some bad; yet there are none of them, however good in themselves, good in God's sight, as they do not proceed from a principle of faith in the heart, and are not directed to the glory of God as their ultimate scope and end.

4. Lastly, Your eternal salvation. It is the stated ordinance of heaven, Mark 16:16; 'He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.' So the clearing of that point, is the clearing whether ye be in a state of salvation or not. This is a point than which there is none more weighty and important. How then can that miss to be a point of the greatest moment, on which it depends? Were men more concerned as to their lot and place in the other world, they would be less concerned about the vain pleasures, amusements, and profits of this world; and bend all their endeavours and attention to gain a blessed and happy eternity.

Upon this, I hope, some may be ready to say, Seeing so much depends upon being in the faith, and since we must eternally perish without it, what shall we do to get faith, that we may not underlie the wrath of God for ever? I answer, Faith is the gift of God, and to him you must apply for it; Jesus Christ is the author and finisher of faith, and to him ye must betake yourselves, that he may work it in you; and the Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of faith, and it is the effect of his operation: so that you must have recourse to him, that he may 'fulfil in you the work of faith with power. More particularly, if you would have this precious grace of faith,

1. Be diligent in reading and hearing the word. This is a mean that God hath appointed for begetting faith in the hearts of sinners. Hence the apostle tells us, Rom. 10:17; that 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' Such as would have faith without hearing, would have it out of God's way. See that ye diligently attend the preaching of the word, and miss no opportunity of hearing it. The ordinances are the organ through which the Spirit breathes, when he conveys quickening influences into the souls of men. They are the

conduit-pipes through which the water of life runs. They are Christ's road in which he comes to bless sinners. See then that ye be not out of the way when he passeth by. The pool of Bethesda was a figure of the ordinances, to which the diseased repaired, to wait the descent of the angel to trouble the waters: and whosoever stepped into the pool after the moving of the waters; was immediately healed. But if any absented themselves, they could receive no benefit thereby. So if ye would be healed of your spiritual diseases, especially unbelief, that deadly malady, that fixes the guilt of all your sins upon you, make conscience of attending the preaching of the word, and cry for the Spirit of faith.

2. Pray earnestly to God, that he would teach you to believe. Remember faith is his gift, and he bestows it on whomsoever he will. Pray diligently for it; and redeem time for that end. And pray importunately, besieging heaven with your cries for that effect, as resolved to get what ye want. Seek faith from God as a condemned man would seek a pardon: seek this, as a man that sees death before him would sue for his life. Remember, O sinner, that there is no life for you without it: for 'he that believeth not, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.' Fall down then before God, and cry for it as for life, saying, 'O give me faith, or else I die. I may live, and be happy for ever, without friends or relations, wealth, honours, or pleasures; but I cannot live happily and comfortably without faith. Without it I can do nothing acceptable in thy sight. Vouchsafe me this precious blessing, that I may glorify thy name for ever.'

II. I now proceed to consider the trial of this point. This the text takes up in these two things, self-examination, and self-probation.

First, Self-examination. We must carefully, examine whether we be in the faith or not. And this speaks the following things.

1. The necessity of the knowledge of the faith, both of the doctrine of faith in fundamentals, and the grace of faith as to the nature of it, though it be not an experimental knowledge. None can examine

themselves on a point they have no notion of: so that those who are grossly ignorant of the nature of faith, are quite incapable of self-examination in this point, but just walk on in darkness and confusion to their own ruin, 1 John 2:11. How much then does it concern all to cultivate the knowledge both of the doctrine and grace of faith?

2. Men professing faith may yet be void of it. They may seem to be in the faith, in a gracious state, who are yet in unbelief, and in the gall of bitterness; otherwise there would be no need of self-examination on that head. There is no need of it in heaven or hell; for there are no false colours worn there; nor do any there seem to be any more but what really they are. But here, in the visible church, are foolish virgins as well as wise, and foolish builders as well as those who are not so. Great is the need, then, of self-examination.

3. The certain knowledge of our estate, whether we be in the faith or not, gracious or graceless, may be attained in the use of ordinary means, without extraordinary revelation. Self-examination and probation are that means; 2 Pet. 1:10. 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.' Many complain they can never get to a point in that matter: but let them inform their judgment as to the nature and evidences of faith; let them lay aside their laziness and their untender walking, shewing a precise regard to the duties of morality; and it will not be so hard. But when people remain in confusion as to the nature and evidences of faith, cannot bring themselves to the bar, and continue untender in their walk, what can be expected? Hence our Lord says, Matth. 6:23. 'If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!' And says the wise man, Prov. 10:4. 'He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand.' Whereas diligence in the Christian walk, and tender walking in the way of the Lord, are happy means of getting marks of faith. Hence Christ says, John 14:21. 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.'

4. There is a rule of trial and self-examination given. That we are commanded to examine ourselves, implies there is a rule given we are to examine ourselves by. Hence the beloved disciple says, 1 John 5:13. 'These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.' God's word is a looking-glass, wherein good and bad may see their true image, if they will. It is a fire that separates the good metal and dross; it is our way-mark, shewing where we are for the present, whither we are going, and pointing to the right way. This frightens many at the Bible; and few make this proper use of it, but skim it over. O! Sirs, regard God's word, and try your state by it, for it is a sure and infallible rule, nay the only rule for it.

5. There is a faculty of self-judging in man, otherwise he were incapable of examining himself. Hence the wise man says, Prov. 20:27. 'The Spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly.' This candle, whether shining with the light of reason only, or with the light of grace also, is capable to make the discovery. Even the foolish virgins saw at length that their lamps were gone out. And all are made to see they are not in the faith, before they are brought into it. So then you may, if ye will, erect this court of examination within your own breast, your own soul and conscience being both judge and party; but it is only a subordinate judge, whose sentence, if wrong, will not stand, but be overthrown by the supreme Judge, by whose law the decision must be made.

6. Lastly, A close applying of that self-judging faculty for the trial of that point. Hence the Psalmist saith this was his practice, Psal. 77:6. 'I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search.' The man must rouse up himself, as peremptory to know his state; must inform himself of the rule he is to be judged by, set it before him, and apply his own case impartially to it, that he may see how they agree, and how the decision is to be made. Say not ye cannot do this. Ye can examine whether ye be in a wealthy or straitened condition; when something is laid to your charge, whether

ye be guilty or not; and whether ye be in such a one's favour or not. Only ye cannot, because ye will not, examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith. O! Sirs, rouse up yourselves to this important exercise, shake off all lazy delays, and set about it vigorously.

Secondly, Self-probation. Ye must prove yourselves. This speaks,

1. Ye must not take the matter of your state upon trust, hoping the best without due evidence, and stopping there, like the person of whom it is said, Isa. 44:20. 'He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?' That is an easy way indeed, but very unsafe; as was the case of Laodicea, Rev. 3:17 unto whom our Lord says, 'Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' Men entering on self-examination find it difficult and thorny, and they shrink back, contenting themselves to hope well, on they know not what grounds: so the examination is broken off ere the matter is brought to a proof. If the examination before the tribunal of God could be shifted that way, and the decision made in men's favour as superficially, the matter were the less. But there the examination must go through, and the decision must be made, according to, not men's groundless hopes, but the reality of things; according to what Bildad says, Job 8:13, 14. 'So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrite's hope shall perish: whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web.'

2. The matter may, through a close examination, be brought to a decisive proof, however dark and intricate it may seem to be; otherwise we would not be bid prove ourselves. Men may, by close examination of themselves, and thoroughly sifting their own hearts, discover that in and about them, which, according to the word, is decisive of their state, good or bad. Which will leave men inexcusable, in not pursuing for it, but contentedly walking on in

darkness. Closely ply the duty according to scripture rules, and ye will find out how matters stand.

3. We must not stop, but pursue our self-examination, till we come to that proof, and so come to a point in the matter on trial. Thrust forward resolutely, looking to the Lord for light, and his help in the search: he will roll away stones of difficulty, and make darkness light before you; remembering what Christ says, Matth. 13:12. 'Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.' And suppose ye should not reach that proof at one time, ye must carry on the examination at another time, and so from time to time, till ye reach the proof. This is your duty; and if ye steadfastly persist therein, ye will bring matters to a crisis.

4. Lastly, Having reached the proof of your state, whether ye be in the faith or not, pronounce judgment thereon, whether it be good or bad. This is the end for which the self-examination is gone through, and the proof was searched out, that you may thereon form a certain conclusion, whether ye be in the faith or not. And it is necessary so to do, that if ye find ye are not in the faith, ye may give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eye-lids, till ye be brought into that happy state; and that if ye find you are in the faith, ye may give God the glory of it, and improve your blessed condition to his honour.

I shall conclude with a use of exhortation. O! Sirs, examine ye yourselves, whether ye be in the faith, and cease not till ye bring the matter to a proof, a decisive point.

Before I press this exhortation, with motives, I will take notice of some impediments in the way that keep men back from self-examination.

1. Their being carried away with the things of this world, as with a flood, that they can mind nothing else, and have a heart for no other business. Some are so overwhelmed with worldly cares and secular business, that any solid care and concern about their salvation is

quite warded off, and there is no access for the same. Hence our Lord cautions his disciples, Luke 21:34. 'Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.' Some are so drenched in the vanity and pleasures of the world, that they have neither mind of it, nor heart or hand for it. Madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead, and are at their place, before ever they have put this matter to a trial. O! Sirs, guard against this excessive attachment to the world, which will prove ruinous in the end.

2. Love to carnal ease predominant. Spiritual sloth is so masterly over those that give up themselves to it, that, in the midst of warnings from heaven, from without and from within, they must have their case, and keep undisturbed, cost what it will. Hence says Solomon, Prov. 6:9, 10, 11. 'How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy wants as an armed man.' But O what a risk is that, foreboding a fearful waking! if ye love your own souls, strive against this sluggish disposition.

3. A false notion of the easiness of the way to heaven. Many in their thoughts of their getting to heaven, the necessity of their being in the faith, regeneration, universal and unlimited obedience to God in the way of duty, and sparing no known sin, never comes into their head: only they believe God is a merciful God; and when the time comes, they must apply for his mercy. Hence our Lord exhorts, Luke 13:24. 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.'

4. A secret fear that all is wrong. This frightens them from self-examination: and they chuse rather to patch up their present case the best way they can, than fairly to open the wound that it may be healed. What is this but to chuse to die of the disease, rather than to lay it open for cure? But the eyes most closely shut now will be

opened in the other world, as the rich man's were, Luke 16:23. Be not discouraged with fears, but be willing to know the worst as well as the best of your case; for that is your safest course.

5. A general hopefulness as to one's state, got by some passing reflections on some good things they imagine they have, without examining to the bottom. This men come at easily, as it were in passing: and being easy in this course, they never set themselves to go to the ground of the cause, like the church of Laodicea, Rev. 3:17 forecited. This is a very dangerous state, and proves the ruin of many.

6. Lastly, Satan has a mighty influence to the hinderance of it, both in saints and sinners. In the former he mars the comfort of the clear view of their state: in the latter he keeps them from waking out of their natural security, and so holds them back from Christ. And I know no duty he sets himself more against. For being an accomplished master in hellish subtlety, he well knows, that if sinners were at due pains in examining themselves, and discovered the damnable state they were in by nature, they would hasten an escape to the gospel city of refuge; and therefore he lulls them into a sleep of profound security that they may not feel their misery, and the worse than Egyptian bondage they are in to sin and Satan. Awake then, ye that sleep, that Christ may give you light.

I shall now press the exhortation by some motives; and O that the Lord may carry it home with power on your hearts, as your eternal welfare is deeply concerned therein!

Mot. 1. God has given thee a faculty of examining thyself. He has set up a twofold candle for thee; one within thee, conscience, Prov. 20:27 forecited; and another without thee, the written word, Psal. 119:105. And will ye venture to walk on in darkness as to your state, while ye have these lights to let you into it? Sirs, if ye will not bring in that light, and use it for this purpose, a light will be let in, whether ye will or not, that will set the matter in due light, either in mercy, as in

the case of the prodigal, Luke 15:17 or in wrath, as in that of the rich man, chap. 16:23.

Mot. 2. To be bound up from this duty still, is next door to a desperate case, Isa. 44:20 above quoted. While a person is inquiring about his state, there is some hope: but while men are unconcerned about it whether good or bad, that is like the case of men sleeping to death in their bleeding wounds. Publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of heaven before self-righteous Pharisees, because the former were more ready by far to admit the conviction of the badness of their state, than the latter, who were blinded with delusive ideas of their own righteousness.

Mot. 3. It is certain ye were once not in the faith, not in a gracious state, as the Ephesians were, Eph. 2:3, 12. Now, dare ye pawn your eternal salvation on it, that ye are now in the faith, in a state of grace? No; but ye hope the best, and are easy. But one would think, that in all reason, according to the weight of the matter, one should labour for a proportional certainty. And to leave a matter of the utmost importance at an uncertainty, and make a leap in the dark into the other world, is a most miserable affair, and argues the greatest instability. Surely then this requires a most solemn and deliberate trial; and if ye were wise for yourselves, ye would bring it to a point.

Mot. 4. There are many false pretenders to religion, from off whose faces Christ will draw the mask. Hence he says, Matth. 7:22, 23. 'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity,' Luke 13:25, 26, 27. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at then door saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not, whence you are; then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our

streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.' Many have Jacob's voice, but Esau's hands; like Judas, they kiss Christ, and betray him. Such pretenders were the Laodiceans, when they fancied they were 'rich, and increased with goods, and stood in need of nothing,' Rev. 3:17. Men may go a great length, in legal humiliation with Ahab, in repentance with Pharaoh, in reformation with Herod, in zeal for religion with Jehu, and in strictness of life as to the outward man with Paul before his conversion; and yet be strangers to the life of religion and godliness. And should not these instances alarm all who profess Christ, to bring the matter to a trial, whether they are in the faith or not? as a mistake here is of the most dangerous consequence.

Mot. 5. This would be a matter of the greatest utility, if followed through, both to believers and unbelievers. To the former it brings the comfort of their faith, clears up their gracious state, and gives them so many evidences for heaven as they have proofs of their faith. To the other it may be the beginning of good; it will give them the knowledge of their disease, which is the first step to the cure; and if once they be thoroughly convinced of their sinful and damnable estate, they may be induced to leave no stone unturned till they be rescued therefrom, by application by faith to the blood and spirit of Jesus Christ, who saves from sin, and delivers from the wrath to come.

Mot. 6. Try now your state, for God will try one and all of you, and no wrong judgment will pass before him. O! to what purpose should we shift a trial, which we know we will certainly undergo, from an infallible hand? We cannot by any sleight or artifice cast a blind before his eyes, Gal. 6:7. 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. All things are naked, and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do,' Heb. 4:13. Not the least thing in or about us can escape his all-piercing eye; for he says, 'I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees,' Zeph. 1:12. God has trying times for lands, and for particular persons, wherein he sets

them. And such a trying time we have just now. O! let us regard the operation of his hands, lest he proceed against us by terrible things in righteousness. However, should we pass untried in this world, we will most certainly be tried in the other, and there will be no altering of the decision then made. Should we not then be stirred up to try ourselves now, and see how matters stand betwixt God and us, that we may not be condemned in the great day of decision and judgment?

Mot. last. It is the express command of God, that ye should try yourselves, whether ye be in the faith or not. God has not only warned you to try this important point, both by his word and providence, but has expressly interposed his authority, binding it as an indispensable duty upon you to try yourselves, as ye will answer it on your highest peril. I say then, Try yourselves as to this weighty affair, lest ye be found to be fighters against God, to spurn at his yoke, and to throw his cords from off you. Try yourselves then, I say, whether ye be in the faith or not, as ye would regard the authority of the great Lord of heaven and earth, and would not fall into the hands of the living God, from which there is no deliverance.

THE DANGER OF UNWORTHY COMMUNICATING*

1 COR. 11:29.—For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

IT is a seasonable advice which Solomon gives, Prov. 23:1. 'When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee.' We expect the great Ruler of heaven and earth is to cover a table for us in this place; but at it some may get their viaticum for heaven, others theirs for hell. The Jews say of the manna in the

wilderness, that it tasted according as every one desired. This I may say of the sacrament, it will be different according to the different palates and constitution of the communicants, like the word; to some the savour of life unto life, and to others the savour of death unto death. The apostle compares baptism to the passing through the Red Sea, which to the Israelites gave a passage to Canaan, but it was a grave to the Egyptians, to swallow them up. The Lord's supper is an open pit for destruction to some, and a chariot to carry others on in their way to heaven. The apostle tells us here the danger of unworthy communicating, notwithstanding which people mostly need rather a bridle than a spur to it.

1. The connection, in the particle for; which shews the words to be a reason of that exhortation, ver. 28, 'But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup,' viz. in the right manner for the hazard is great if we do otherwise.

2. A duty supposed, eating and drinking; which looks sternly on the sacrilege of the Papists in taking the cup from the people, and putting in only wafers into their mouths, contrary to Christ's express command, 'Drink ye all of it.' It is the people, as well as the minister, that eat and drink judgment to themselves, ver. 30.

3. The way that many mar this duty: They do it unworthily, that is unsuitably, unmeetly; they mar it in the making, not going about it in the right way and manner. They are guests, but not meet guests, for the holy table. They come to the marriage-feast, but not with wedding-garments.

4. What comes of it. The consequences are dreadful. They eat and drink damnation [Gr. judgment] to themselves. This judgment to some is temporal, to others eternal. This they are said to eat and drink to themselves; it becomes poison to them, and so they take their death with their own hands. While the meat is in their mouth, wrath goes down with it, as the devil did with Judas's sop.

5. A particular sin lying on them, which provokes God so to treat them: They do not discern the body of the Lord Christ; they do not duly consider the relation betwixt the elements and Christ, and so they rush in upon these creatures of bread and wine, that are of so deep a sanctification as to be the symbols of the body and blood of the Son of God; they sit down at that table, as to their ordinary meals, without that reverence and devotion that ought to be in those who sit down at such a holy table.

Two doctrines may be observed, viz.

DOCT. I. 'Though the right way and manner of communicating be the main thing to be studied in that solemn action, yet many content themselves with the bare doing of the thing, neglecting the doing of it suitably or in a right manner.'

DOCT. II. 'He that communicates unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself, while he eats the sacramental bread, and drinks the wine.'

I shall prosecute each doctrine in order.

DOCT. I. 'Though the right way and manner of communicating be the main thing to be studied in that solemn action, yet many content themselves with the bare doing of the thing, neglecting the doing of it suitably, and in a right manner.' Here I shall shew,

I. The necessity of communicating suitably and in a right manner.

II. Why it is, that though the right way and manner of communicating be the main thing to be studied in that solemn action, yet many content themselves with the bare doing of it, neglecting the doing of it suitably, and in a right manner.

III. Make some improvement.

I. I am to shew the necessity of communicating suitably, and in a right manner.

1. God commands it, ver. 28. 'So let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.' The particle is emphatical, as John 4:6. 'Jesus therefore being wearied with his journey, sat thus [or so] on the well.' Acts 7:8. 'So Abraham begat Isaac.' The matter and manner of all duties are linked together in the command of God. What God hath joined, let no man put asunder. He will have his service well done, as well as done, 1 Chron. 28:9. 'And thou Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all imaginations of the thoughts.' Masters on earth challenge to themselves a power to cause their servants to do their work as they would have it; but though they leave the way of doing it sometimes to the discretion of the servants, yet the Lord never does so, but always commands not only what, but how to do, 1 Thess. 4:1.

2. No duty is pleasing to God, unless it be done in a right manner, ib. Unless it be so done, it is not done to his mind. It gives not content to the heart of Christ, though it may give content to men's own blinded hearts. God's will is the supreme law; for we are his own, and what we do, we ought to study to do it to his mind: otherwise we cannot please him, do what we will.

3. Because nothing is a work theologically good, but what is done in a right manner, Heb. 11:6. 'Without faith it is impossible to please him.' There was a vast difference betwixt Cain and Abel's offering, Gen. 4:4, 5. 'The Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering: but to Cain and to his offering he had not respect.' See the reason, Heb. 11:4. 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.' Bonum non, nisi ex integra causa oritur, bonum est. Hence the good works of the heathens were but splendid sins; and those of the unregenerate are so; for they may do much, but not with a perfect heart. One sins and damns his soul at the Lord's table, another communicates worthily. What makes the difference, but the manner

of doing? Hence praying is accounted but howling; eating and drinking is not to eat the Lord's supper, 1 Cor. 11:20. Common eating and drinking are sins, Matth. 24:37. Cloth may be good, and yet the coat base, if it be marred in the making.

4. Though the work be in itself good, yet if it be done unsuitably, not in a right manner, it provokes God to inflict heavy strokes on the doer. Is not a master often at that, he would rather men had not done the work, than that it should be so done? 1 Chron. 15:13. 'For because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.' So Jehu did something for God, but not in a right manner; hence the Lord says, Hos. 1:4. 'I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu.' And the Corinthians having communicated unworthily, or not in the right manner, the apostle observes concerning them, 1 Cor. 11:31. 'For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.' In the mean, little is accepted, if it is rightly done: hence it is said of Asa, 1 Kings 15:14. 'The high places were not removed; nevertheless Asa, his heart was perfect with the Lord all his days.'

5. Only the duty done in a right manner does prosper, and get the blessing. Mark that so, Matth. 24:46. 'Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. A man may pray ten thousand times, and never be heard; and go from one communion to another, and never be sealed to the day of redemption. A groan from the heart will do more than all these, Rom. 8:16. Our meat can do us no good, and our clothes cannot warm us, if we do not use them in the right manner. No wonder that many are never the better of all the sacraments they get, for they communicate not aright.

6. If we communicate not in a right manner, we do no more than others, than hypocrites actually do, and Pagans may do. Hypocrites eat and drink, who shall drink eternally of the wine of the wrath of God, Luke 13:26, 27. Pagans can eat bread and drink wine; nay, the very beasts may do it. And shall a Christian think that he does enough when he does no more?

7. Lastly, God gets no glory otherwise from us in our duty, Matt. 5:16. He gets much dishonour by the way that many of us partake of his table. The means must be suited to the end; and therefore our duty must be rightly done, if we would glorify God.

II. I proceed to shew, why it is, that though the right way and manner of communicating be the main thing in that solemn action, yet many content themselves with the bare doing of the thing, neglecting the doing of it suitably, and in a right manner.

1. Because to communicate is easy, but to communicate in a right manner is very difficult. It is easy to wait on several days and hear sermons, to get a token, and eat the bread and drink the wine: but it is a hard task to plough up the fallow-ground, to mourn for sin, to get the heart in case for communion with Christ, and by faith to feed upon him. It is easy to say, we resolve to be for Christ; but it is hard to pluck out right-eyes, and cut off right hands; it is hard to set idols to the door, and give the whole heart to a Saviour.

2. Because they obtain their end by the bare performance of the duty. As, (1.) Peace of mind. Many consciences are half-awakened; though they be not so far awakened as to give men no rest without doing duty in a right manner, yet they will not hold their peace should a man neglect duties altogether. (2.) It gains a man credit in the world, and that is a strong cord to draw a man to the outside of duties, Matth. 6:2. It is no small matter to have a name, and to seem good; and to be called godly, is affected by those who are at no pains to be what they would seem. These are the mean and low ends they purpose to themselves, and they get them by that way. But the high and noble ends of the Christian communion with God, strength against corruption, &c. call for other sort of work.

3. Men may get duties done, and their lust kept too: they may go to a communion table, and to the table of devils too: but to do duties in the right manner is inconsistent with peace with our lusts, Psal. 66:18. If they would have a calm sea, Jonah must be thrown

overboard. Hence they take so little pains in self-examination before a communion. There are some secret lusts which the man has no will to disturb; therefore he will not light the candle and search, lest he should be obliged to cast out the old leaven.

4. Because men mostly have low and mean thoughts of God and his service, Mal. 1:6, 7, 8. It is not every one that knows the Lord. Many worship they know not what, and therefore they give him they care not what. If men had suitable thoughts of that God whom they serve, they would be careful how they serve him, Psal. 89:6, 7. Wherefore the apostle, to put men out of their sloth, and engage them to the right performance of duties, tells what a one God is, Heb. 12:28, 29. 'Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.'

5. Because men mostly are unacquainted with communion and fellowship with God to be had in duties; they know not the necessity of it, nor the excellency of it. Hence they are not at pains about it. He that minds to entertain his prince, will be at pains to provide all things necessary for that effect, while he is not so taken up who is expecting no guests.

Use. Of lamentation. O how sad is it that there are so many who content themselves with the bare work of communicating, neglecting the right manner! That there are many such, take these evidences.

1. Many approach very rashly and inconsiderately to the Lord's table. It would make a tender heart to tremble, how forward many are for going to the communion-table, though it be fenced by the severe threatenings of God. They are like the horse, Job 29:22, 23, 24 who 'mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.' And they are as the leviathan, by whom 'darts are accounted as stubble,' and who laugheth at the shaking of a spear,' Job 41:29. They snatch up the

holy things of God, and with polluted fingers do they handle them, How few are there that find any notable difficulty in their way to it? Truly it is lamentable to think of this rashness.

2. The little pains that many are at beforehand to get their hearts prepared for this work. Any thing thy do, lies mostly in hearing in public; few wrestling with God, that he would prepare them as a bride adorned for her husband.

3. The licentious lives of communicants. Many, when the work is over, turn just back to their old ways, clearly discovering that it has made no great impression on their hearts while they were at it. Many are a shame to religion, harden the profane, and grieve the hearts of the godly by their courses.

We may justly wonder that the Lord does not sometimes make a breach among us, and mingle our blood with our sacrifices. Under the law, the Lord made some sad instances of his anger; as in the case of Uzzah, 2 Sam. 6:6, 7 of the men of Bethshemesh, 1 Sam. 6:19 and of Nadab and Abihu, Lev. 10:1, 2. Is not the Lord as angry still with the abuse of Gospel holy things? Yes, surely; but now the dispensation is more spiritual, and the strokes of anger are more spiritual also; such as hardness of heart, and blindness of mind. Some souls may get their death's wounds at the table, though their bodies come away whole and sound.

Use, Of exhortation. Be exhorted to get your hearts in a case for performing this duty in a right manner. It may be some have communicated often, and never to this day communicated once right. O strive to begin now! The advantage of it is great. Ye may find that in a communion, that ye never found yet, if ye be worthy partakers; if not, the hazard is great. Which take in

DOCT. II. 'He that communicates unworthily, eats and drink judgment to himself, while he eats the sacramental bread, and drinks the sacramental wine.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What communicating unworthily is.

II. What judgments unworthy communicating exposes people to.

III. Make application.

1. I am to shew, what communicating unworthily is. A man communicates worthily, not when he merits the sacrament, but when he is meet for it. So a man communicates unworthily, when he is unmeet for this holy ordinance, when he wants a gospel-fitness for it. To find out this then, we must enquire into the nature of this ordinance. Consider, then,

First, The author of this ordinance. It is Christ, 1 Cor. 11:23. He appointed it. It belongs to him only to appoint the several parts of worship, who was faithful in his own house as a Son; and worship commanded by men is but vain worship. Now, if Christ be the author of this ordinance, then it is meet, 1. That we have an honourable respect for it as a divine ordinance. 2. That we go about it out of respect to the command of Christ. 3. That we expect the blessing and the advantage by it from him.

1. People communicate unworthily when they have not an honourable respect for, and a due reverence to, this ordinance, when they partake of it, Mal. 1:6, 7. If it bear the stamp of divine authority, is it meet that persons should despise it, and not be touched with reverence of it? When the angel of the covenant appeared to Moses in the bush, he said to him, 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground,' Exod. 3:5. But, behold in this sacrament there are bread and wine of deeper sanctification than that holy ground, they being the symbols of Christ's body and blood.

2. When people do not go about it out of respect to the command of Christ, may he not justly astonish such at his table with that

question, 'If I be a master, where is my fear?' Mal. 1:6. Is it meat that people should communicate out of custom, vain-glory, &c.? If the sense of his command do not bring thee there, thou canst not expect the sense of his love, but rather to feel the weight of his hand, when there. As we must believe the truth because God has said it, otherwise our assent is not divine faith; so we must do our duty because God has commanded it, otherwise our obedience is not acceptable to him.

3. When people look to any other quarter than to Christ for the good of the sacrament. Some look no farther than the elements. This is to put them in Christ's stead: but be not deceived, bread and wine cannot nourish thy soul. Some are apt to look to ministers: and if such a one as they affect serve the table they are at, they think they are sure of advantage. If they knew your hearts so led aside, they would, with a sad heart and angry countenance, say to you, as Jacob did to Rachel, 'Am I in God's stead?' Gen. 30:2. The spouse went a little further than the watchmen before she found her beloved, Cant. 3:4. Many smart by this respecting particular ministers, and overlooking the Master of this ordinance.

Secondly, Consider the time of the institution; 'The same night in which he was betrayed by Judas, when the hour and power of darkness was approaching.' If so, then it appears that this sacrament was left us as a token by our dying friend. He was now to go out of the world to the Father; but before he goes, he will leave his people a feast and token of love. Did he not know what was abiding him? Yes, verily he knew all. O then might not the prospect of the agony and bloody drops in the garden, the racking of his body, and the load of wrath under which his soul was to wrestle, have made him mind himself and forget us? Nay, in the night in which he was betrayed, he instituted this sacrament. Surely then it is most suitable, 1. That we prize it highly as the love-token of a dying friend. 2. That we be at pains to prepare to keep the tryst which he was so concerned to set. 3. That at such a time we avenge the treachery upon our lusts. So they partake unworthily,

1. Who partake of this ordinance without a due valuing of it as the love-token of a dying Lord. A token from a friend, though it be small in itself, yet ought to be prized; a token from a dying friend more; but a token from a friend dying for us most of all; and he would be reckoned a monster of men, that would not highly value it. Not to value this ordinance highly, and so desire and delight in it, as many communicants do, who, if they could get their credit kept, could well live without it, and in their unconcernedness of heart for it and about it, say practically, The table of the Lord is contemptible, is to trample upon our dying Lord's love-token, and to say in effect, He should have been otherwise taken up that night in which he was betrayed.

2. Those communicants who are not at pains to prepare to keep the tryst our Lord set at that time. I may say, he forgot to eat his own bread, that he might provide for us. He did not so mind the cup of wrath which he was to get himself, as to forget the sacramental cup for our comfort. When he was on the cross, he trysts to meet the believing thief in heaven; and when the clouds of wrath were gathering, and ready to pour down upon him, he trysts to meet believers on earth. And shall we forget the tryst set in that remarkable night? But, ah! how many are there that will not be at pains to prepare for this ordinance, to examine themselves as to their state, frame, &c.? They have built up mountains and walls of separation betwixt Christ and them, but are at no pains to remove them, nor to employ Christ to level them. Do not these communicate unworthily?

3. Who do not avenge the treachery. How came Judas to betray him? Was it not the sins of his own people that were the spring of the unhappy action? Your sins were the chief traitors. Then surely Christ instituting this sacrament at this time, says in effect concerning our lusts, as Psal. 137:7, 8, 9. 'Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom, in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof. O daughter of Babylon who art to be destroyed: happy shall he be that rewardeth thee, as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stone'.

Can a worthy communicant partake of this ordinance, and mind the treachery his Lord met with, and not break his covenant with his lusts, and renounce his old master? No, surely. They communicate unworthily who come to this ordinance at peace with any lust; they react Judas' sin-kiss of Christ, and betray him.

Thirdly, Consider what is represented by the sacred symbols in this ordinance. The broken bread and wine represents Christ's broken body, and his shed blood, Christ suffering for sinners. He is sacramentally crucified before our eyes in that ordinance. Now, if the bread and wine represents to us Christ's body broken for us, and his blood shed for us, it is meet that, in communicating, 1. We meditate believingly on these sufferings. 2. That our hearts be inflamed with love to him. 3. That they be filled with sorrow for and hatred of sin. Then,

1. They communicate unworthily, who do not in their partaking meditate believingly on the sufferings of Christ. Christ will ask that question at communicants, Matth. 16:15. 'Whom say ye that I am?' And I would ask beforehand, Do ye believe that Jesus the Son of Mary, who was crucified betwixt two thieves without the gates of Jerusalem, was the Son of God, the only Saviour of the world, and that Christ? Do ye believe that Christ suffered? If ye do indeed believe it aright, I say, as Matth. 16:17. 'Blessed art thou: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but Christ's Father which is in heaven.' And sure I am, if ye do believe, ye cannot shun to meditate on it at the sacrament. This wonderful sight will dazzle your eyes; a sight of God suffering will blind your eyes as to other objects, and make you retire into yourself, to see and wonder, and with admiration to think on this terrible sight. Do they not act most unworthily here who are not thus taken up? What would ye have said of Moses, had he not turned aside to see that great sight, the bush burning, yet not consumed? Exod. 3. Had ye been on Mount Calvary, within hearing of Christ's dying groans, within sight of his pierced, mangled, and racked body, and had unconcernedly turned your back, and passed all without notice, would ye not say, he had been just had

he turned you off that place quick into hell? Here ye have the same sight; and if ye behold it unconcernedly, ye act a most unworthy part, and oppose yourselves to the most direful effects of his vengeance.

2. Who communicate without love to Christ in exercise. He is represented a king's son in love with a beggar, loving her, and dying for her. O miserable miscreant! does not this affect thy heart, who art this beggar? Can there be greater love? John 15:13. What hellish cold has frozen thy affections, that this fire cannot warm, nay, melt them! What a heart of a devil hast thou, that Christ, in his glorious apparel, his red garments, cannot captivate. Be astonished, O heavens, be horribly afraid; tremble, O earth; rend, O rocks; be struck blind, O glorious sun in the firmament, when ye see the communicants sitting without love to Christ, when he is sacramentally lying before them, broken, wounded, and pierced with the envenomed arrows of God's curse, and all for them!

3. Who communicate impenitently. Have ye pierced him? How unworthy will ye be, if ye do not 'look upon him whom ye have pierced, and mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son, and be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born,' Zech. 12:10. Will ye come to the table without the tear in your eye? O! unworthy communicants, what has petrified your hearts, turned you into stones harder than the adamant, which the blood of the goat will dissolve? Christ's dying groans rent the rocks, and raised and alarmed the dead; and wilt thou sit stupid? Where sorrow for sin and hatred of it is wanting at a communion-table, there is eating and drinking judgment, which, when it begins to work within you, will make you mourn bitterly, either here or in hell.

Fourthly, Consider the bread and the wine is offered and given to you at the table of the Lord, in token of Christ's offering himself to you, with all his benefits, 1 Cor. 10:16; and your taking both, eating and drinking, declares your acceptance of the offer and application of Christ to your souls. Surely then it is meet, 1. That ye believe that

Christ is willing to be yours. 2. That ye do sincerely and cordially accept of the offer.

1. They are unworthy communicants who partake doubting of Christ's willingness to be theirs, with all his saving benefits. Will ye not believe him when he gives you a sealed declaration of his mind? To doubt of this, is to say he is but mocking and solemnly cheating you; so that no wonder we say 'He that doubteth is damned if he eat.' What though ye be most unworthy? he stands not on that. Though your sins be many, the sea of his blood can drain them all, Isa. 1:18. Mic. 7:18. If the devil get in thus far on you, it will be an error in the first concoction; and till ye get over it, it is impossible to communicate aright, or get good of the sacrament.

2. Who taking the elements, yet do not take Christ by faith. Then it may be said, as John 1:11. 'He came unto his own, and his own received him not.' Is the bread or cup offered to you, then? by that Christ says, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in, Psal. 24:7. Therefore we ought to set our hearts wide open, clasp him in the arms of faith, embrace and welcome him into our souls. To take the bread in your mouths, and yet to hold Christ out of your hearts, is to put a solemn cheat upon the King of glory, which will bring upon you the curse of the deceiver, Mal. 1:14. 'Which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing;' and the cheat will be discovered, if ye repent not, before the whole assembled world at the great day, to your everlasting confusion. This is to betray Christ, with a witness. Either, then, meddle not with these sacramental symbols, or take him by faith, And if ye take him, ye must let your lusts go.

Fifthly, Consider this ordinance is a seal of the new covenant, 1 Cor. 11:25. 'This cup is the new testament in my blood.' Christ has covenanted and left in his testament to his people all things necessary for them. His word in itself is sufficient security; but guilt is a fountain of fears; and we are guilty, and therefore fearful souls.

And therefore, that it may be more sure to us, he has appended this seal. It is meet then, 1. That they be in the covenant who partake. 2. That we take the sacrament as a seal of God's covenant to us. 3. That we believe more firmly.

1. They are unworthy communicants who are not in covenant with God, and yet come to his table. It is a profaning of God's seal to set it to a blank. It is a feast for friends, not for enemies, Cant. 5:1; and if ye come in a state of enmity, ye can expect no kind entertainment; 'For can two walk together except they be agreed?' Amos 3:3; yea, ye will get a sad welcome such as the man got who wanted the wedding-garment, Matth. 22:11, 12. If there be not a mutual consent, it is no marriage: and if there be no marriage, ye have nothing ado with the marriage-feast.

2. They that use it as a seal of their covenant with God, and not of God's covenant with them. Surely the sacrament is an obligatory ordinance to obedience; but this is not the principal end of it, but rather to be a seal of God's covenant with us. The reason why so many afterwards appear to have been unworthy communicants, is, that they go to that ordinance rather to oblige themselves to obedience, than to get a full covenant sealed to them for obedience. All our strength lies in Christ; and worthy communicants go to Christ in the sacrament to get influences of grace secured to them under his own seal, that they may in time of need afterwards know what quarter to betake themselves to for supply.

3. They whose faith of the benefits of the covenant is not more confirmed. This is to sit down at the table, but not to taste of the meat that is set thereon. Why does the Lord give us such encouragement, and yet we grow never a whit stronger in faith; and though he give us new confirmations, yet we have never a whit more confidence in him? Would not a man think himself affronted to be thus treated?

Sixthly, Consider this ordinance is appointed for strengthening our souls, for the nourishing of the Lord's people, and their growth in grace. It is a supper, a feast where Christ is both maker and matter, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed. The Lord's people must needs have food to nourish the new man, and grace will decay unless it be recruited. If this be so, then it is meet, 1. That communicants be spiritually alive. 2. That they actually feed spiritually at this holy table.

1. Graceless souls must needs communicate unworthily. Where there is no grace there can be no strengthening of it. There can be no communion betwixt a holy God and an unholy sinner, Prov. 15:8. God will not make Nebuchadnezzar's image of mystical Christ. We must be born from above ere we can be capable to feed on Heaven's dainties. It was the custom of Egypt, not of Canaan, to bring dead men to feasts. They are rather to be buried out of God's sight. An unregenerate soul at the Lord's table is a monster that hath not a hand to take his meat, nor a mouth to eat it, nor a stomach to digest it, Heb. 11:6; and all that can be expected, is, that he will come away twice dead. Therefore, 'examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' 2 Cor. 13:5.

2. They that do not actually feed at this table; for which cause grace in exercise is necessary. He is an unworthy guest that does not eat his meat. It is dangerous to be in a spiritual sleep at the Lord's table; therefore the church prays, Psal. 80:18. 'Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.' Now, the food set before us there is Christ's body and blood, John 6:55; that is, Christ himself as crucified for our sins. By faith we feed upon him; faith realiseth the sufferings of Christ; it looks upon Christ as the common treasury of all grace, as the principle of life, and root of holiness. It eyes the promise for the conveyance of grace into our souls; looks on the sacrament as the golden pipes conveying the golden oil; and thus applies Christ, his merits and benefits to the soul, getting into his wounds, the clefts of that rock that was smitten to give nourishment.

Seventhly, It is appointed for the remembrance of Christ. Christ is gone to heaven; and his people are apt to forget him. This ordinance is a memorial of his death, and herein he is to be remembered. If so, then it is meet, 1. That they who sit down at his table know him; for there can be no remembering without knowledge of and acquaintance with him. 2. That he be remembered gratefully.

1. Those partake unworthily who are ignorant persons, and are unacquainted with Christ. Those that have been always blind, cannot remember the light. Ignorant souls will, as blind men, deal blows at the Lord's table, making themselves guilty of the body and blood of Christ. It is not only necessary that we have the knowledge of the principles of religion, but that we be taught the same by the Spirit, and in conversion be acquainted with the Master of this feast. Ignorant people cannot discern the Lord's body.

2. Who do not remember him affectionately. To remember his dying love is our great work; to remember how seasonably he undertook the work of saving sinners, Psal. 40:7; how faithfully he performed all, how willingly and constantly he obeyed and suffered. What do men sit down at the Lord's table for, if they neglect this? And this cannot be done aright, but the soul will be suitably affected.

Lastly, It is appointed to be a sign and token of the communion of saints, to signify, not only our communion with Christ, but with one another; not only our union with Christ, by faith, but with one another by love, 1 Cor. 10:17. It is meet, then, that we sit down at this table in love.

They partake, then, unworthily who sit down at this table with malice and envy in their hearts against others, Matth. 5:24, 25. If we forgive not others their injuries to us, God will not forgive us. This leaven must be purged out, if ye would be a holy lump. Some will make a fashion of reconciliation before the sacrament; and when that is over, they are just as they were before: but God will not be mocked.

II. The next general head is to show, what judgments unworthy communicating exposes people to. It exposes them,

1. To bodily strokes, as the Corinthians felt, 1 Cor. 11:30. 'For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. One falls into a decay of strength, another takes sickness after a communion, another slips off the stage. Some give one reason for it, and some another. But, O! unworthy communicating is often the procuring cause of all. What a dreadful distemper seized Belshazzar when he was abusing the vessels of the temple! Dan. 5; but the sin of unworthy communicating is more dreadful.

2. To spiritual strokes, strokes upon the soul, blindness of mind, hardness of heart, searedness of conscience, &c. The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain; he will let guilt lie on him. Hence some after communions are let fall into scandalous sins; some meet with greater darkness and deadness than ever before, and some with sharp desertions.

3. To eternal strokes. As to such as are out of Christ, unworthy communicating will damn them, as well as gross sins in the life and outward conversation, and no doubt will make a hotter hell than that of Pagans. Murder is a crying sin, but the murder of the Son of God is most dreadful, and the Mediator's vengeance is most terrible.

And they are said to eat and drink judgment to themselves; which I conceive, imports,

1. That the hurt which comes by unworthy communicating comes upon the person himself, not on Christ, whose body and blood he is guilty of; for themselves has a relation not to others, but to Christ. They may eat judgment to ministers and fellow communicants, if they have a sinful hand in bringing them to the table. Only, though the slight is given to Christ, yet it rebounds upon the man himself, and lies heavy on him with its consequences. They do interpretatively murder Christ, in so far as they abuse the symbols of his broken body

and shed blood; but they can do him no harm; they kick against the pricks, which run into their bodies and souls.

2. That they themselves are the authors of their own ruin. They take their death with their own hand, like a man that wilfully drinks of a cup of poison, and so murder their own souls. And O what a dreadful thing is this for a man to perish by his own hands!

3. That they shall be as sure of judgment upon them for their sin, if repentance prevent it not, and cut the thread, as they are of the sacramental bread they eat, and the wine they drink. Death is in the cup to them, and it will go down with the elements into their bowels.

USE. Beware then of unworthy communicating. Profane not the holy things of God by your rash approaches to this ordinance. If the love of the Lord Jesus will not allure you to a conscientious performance of this duty in a holy manner, let the terror of God affright you. Behold life and death are set before you. Venture not on the swordpoint of vengeance, even the vengeance of his temple. O sinner! hold thy hand. Do not wound the Lord of glory, and bring innocent blood on thy head. O wound not your own souls with the wound of an enemy! Provoke not God to give you blood to drink.

Object. 1. We had better refrain than run such a risk. Ans. If you cannot think on parting with your lusts, but you must either communicate keeping them still, or not at all, then assure yourselves, God will avenge this contempt of himself and his Son upon you, and ye shall fall into the hands of the living God through eternity, Luke 19:27. If ye think of being better disposed afterwards, ye deceive yourselves; for the longer ye keep your sins, it will be the harder to part with them. And who knows if ever your eyes may see another such occasion? But if ye mind to part with your sins now, and be in earnest for communion with God in that ordinance, then ye will make conscience of, and sincerely endeavour worthy communicating, which will be accepted; for it is a gospel, not a legal fitness, that we urge.

Object. 2. But that terror confounds me when I think of approaching the Lord's table, lest he be provoked to strike me dead on the spot, or I get my damnation sealed. Ans. Satan labours either to make us feed without fear, or else to fear so as we cannot feed. But look ye to God through the vail of the flesh of Christ, and so you will see an atoned and pacified God. If such fear seize thee, then acknowledge God is just if he should do to you as you fear: but because you need a Saviour, and he has commanded you to accept of him, take him, though with a trembling hand; and having nothing to bring with you, come to get all. Say, Lord, if thou shouldst confound me before all the people, thou art just; but I plead mercy through Christ; and if thou wilt give me thy grace, I am content to be a monument of grace. I have nothing, but I am content to be thy debtor for all. And so you will find a reviving.

I shall only say, 1. Examine yourselves as to your state, your frame, your graces, your wants, &c. and know how matters stand with you. Take a look of your former ways, and turn to the Lord with your whole heart.

2. Put away the strange gods that are among you. Look what sin has been indulged, and let this be the parting time; for one leak will sink the ship, Psal. 66:18.

3. Employ Christ for suitable preparation. Use the means, but look to him alone for the blessing.

4. Lastly, Do this work that ye would do if ye were to die on the communion-sabbath. Sacramentum et articulus mortis æquiparantur. In death we go to Christ, in the sacrament he comes to us: and who knows but some of us may get our provision there for another world, either in mercy or in wrath? But happy they who set themselves for dying furniture.

THE NATURE OF PRAYER

EPH. 6:18.—Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints.

PRAYER is a duty of natural religion, and by God's appointment is one of the chief means by which Christ communicates the benefits of redemption to sinners; and this important duty is enjoined in these words. In which we have,

1. The duty itself, praying. This is recommended and enjoined to all, as ever they would stand, and not be ruined by their spiritual enemies.

2. The amplification of this weighty subject; where notice,

- (1.) The time of it, always, or at every season. We must always be in a praying frame, and miss no season wherein God calls for it, but in every season of prayer be praying, 2 Sam. 9:7.

- (2.) The kinds of prayer, all prayer, i. e. all sorts of prayer, public, private, secret, ordinary, extraordinary, &c. petitioning prayer, for good things, here called prayer in a strict sense; supplicatory prayer, deprecating evils, called supplication.

- (3.) The manner of prayer. [1.] It must be in the Spirit; not with the lip, tongue, and memory only, but with the heart or inward man, or rather by the Spirit of God, with his assistance. [2.] With watchfulness, keeping the soul in a wakerife disposition for it, and in it, that the heart wander not. [3.] With all perseverance, continuing instant in it, whatever may occur to discourage us.

4. Those we are to pray for, all saints; not only for ourselves, but others, especially, though not only, for the children of God.

The text affords the following doctrine.

DOCT. 'Prayer is a duty always necessary to be performed in the several kinds of it, and in the right manner, and in which we are to be concerned, not only for ourselves, but for others.'

To discover the nature of prayer, which in our Catechism is said to be 'an offering up of our desires to God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies,' I will consider the parts of prayer in general, and in particular,

I. Prayer, generally considered, consists of three parts.

1. Petition, or prayer strictly and properly so called, whereby one desires of God the supply of one's wants, begs the good necessary for himself or others, and deprecates evil inflicted or feared. Praying always with all prayer, &c.

2. Confession of sin, Dan. 9:4. It is so very natural that sinners coming to God to ask mercies should make confession, that it is a very necessary part of the sinner's prayer; and prayer is so called, Neh. 9:3. And the deeper one is in confession, he readily speeds the better in prayer.

3. Thanksgiving for mercies, Phil. 4:6. God prevents us with his benefits, we are deep in his debt, ere we come to ask of him; and therefore it is necessary that thanksgiving have a place in our prayers. And it also is called 'praying,' Luke 18:11.

II. Let us consider the parts of prayer in particular. These are,

1. Prayer properly so called, or petition.

2. Confession of our sins.

3. Thanksgiving for mercies.

FIRST, Prayer properly so called, or petition.

Here I shall shew,

1. Wherein the formal nature of prayer consists.
2. To whom we are to pray.
3. In whose name we are to pray.
4. By whose assistance acceptable prayer is performed.
5. For whom we must pray.
6. For what we are to pray.
7. How we are to pray, if we would pray rightly and acceptably.
8. Whether all such prayers are accepted, heard, &c.

FIRST, Wherein does the formal nature of prayer consist? It lies precisely in offering up our desires to God, for things that we need. It is a motion of our hearts towards God, to move him as it were to look favourably on us, Psal. 62:8 a pouring out our heart before the Lord; a lifting our soul to him, Psal. 25:1 a presenting our supplications to him, as petitioners, Dan. 9:18.

We command our inferiors, we demand of our equals; we may by some deed of our own lay an obligation on, and some way excite an inclination in, any man, even our superior, to help us; but none of these ways can work with God. What then remains but a religious and submissive offering of our desires to God, for his help, who knows our hearts? And this is what we call prayer. Hence,

1. There may be prayer made to God without words. The desires of the heart offered to God though not clothed with words, is prayer, truly and properly so called, Exod. 14:15. Words are not necessary

from the nature of prayer, but on the account of ourselves, to affect us the more, and to honour God with our bodies as well as our souls.

2. There can be no prayer, properly so called, without the desires of the heart going out to God. Prayer without intention, say the Jews, is like a body without a soul. A flourish of the best chosen words, without suitable affection going along with them, is not prayer before the Lord, but the carcase of prayer, wanting the soul and life.

SECONDLY, To whom we are to pray? We are to pray to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and to God only; not to saints, angels, nor any creature whatsoever. For,

1. Prayer is an eminent part of religious worship, Joel 2:32 and religious worship is only to be given to God, Matth. 4:10. 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' The holy angels refuse it, Rev. 22:8, 9 and the saints also, as in the case of Peter, Acts 10:25, 26.

2. The object of prayer and of faith are the very same, Rom. 10:14. For the ground of prayer is faith. Therefore, since we are to believe in God, and not in the creature, we must pray to him only. So our Lord directs us, 'Our Father, which art in heaven.'

3. Because God only is qualified (if I may so speak) for hearing prayer. He only is able to search the heart and know it, 1 Kings 8:39. He only is omnipresent to hear every where, Psal. 65:2. He only can pardon the sins and fulfil the desires of his people, Psal. 145:18, 19.

THIRDLY, In whose name are we to pray? In the name of Jesus Christ, and of no other, neither saint nor angel, John 14:13. 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, says he, that will I do.' We must go to the Father, not in the name of any of the courtiers, Col. 2:18 but in the name of his Son, the only Mediator, 1 Tim. 2:5. Here consider,

1. What it is to pray in the name of Christ.

2. Why we must pray in his name.

First, Let us consider what it is to pray in the name of Christ.

1. Negatively. It is not a bare faithless mentioning of his name in our prayers, nor concluding our prayers therewith, Matth. 7:21. The saints use the words, 'through Jesus Christ our Lord,' 1 Cor. 15:57 but often is that scabbard produced, while the sword of the Spirit is not in it. The words are said, but the faith is not exercised.

2. Positively. To pray in the name of Christ is to pray,

1st, At his command, to go to God by his order, John 16:24. 'Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name, says he: ask, and ye shall receive.' Christ as God commands all men to pray, to offer that piece of natural duty to God; but that is not the command meant. But Christ as Mediator sends his own to his Father to ask supply of their wants, and allows them to tell that he sent them, as one recommends a poor man to a friend, John 16:24 just cited. So to pray in the name of Christ is to go to God as sent by the poor man's friend. So it imports,

(1.) The soul's being come to Christ in the first place, John 15:7. 'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' He that would pray aright, must do as those who make Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend first, and then made their suite to their king, Acts 12:20.

(2.) The soul's taking its encouragement to pray from Jesus Christ, Heb. 4:14–16. '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. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' The way to the throne in heaven is blocked up by our sins. And sinners have no confidence to seek the Lord. Jesus Christ came down from heaven, died for the criminals, and gathers them to

himself by effectual calling. He, as having all interest with his Father, bids them go to his Father in his name, and ask what they need, assuring them of acceptance. And from thence they take their encouragement, viz. from his promises in the word. And he gives them his token with them, which the Father will own, and that is his own Spirit, Rom. 8:26, 27. 'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.'

2dly, It is to direct our prayers to God through Jesus Christ, Heb. 7:25. 'Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.' Chap. 13:15. 'By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name;' depending wholly on Christ's merit and intercession for access, acceptance, and a gracious return.

(1.) Depending on Christ for access to God, Eph. 3:12. 'In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence by the faith of him.' There is no access to God but through him, John 14:6. 'No man cometh unto the Father but by me.' They that attempt otherwise to come unto God, will get the door thrown in their face. But we must take hold of the Mediator, and come in at his back, who is the Secretary of heaven.

(2.) Depending on him for acceptance of our prayers, Eph. 1:6. 'He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.' Our Lord Christ is the only altar that can sanctify our gift. If one lay the stress of the acceptance of his prayers on his frame, enlargement, tenderness, &c. the prayer will not be accepted. A crucified Christ only can bear the weight of the acceptance of either our persons or performances.

(3.) Depending on him for a gracious return, 1 John 5:14. 'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.' No prayers are heard and answered but for the Mediator's sake; and whatever petitions agreeable to God's will are put up to God, in this dependence, are heard.

Secondly, Why must we pray in the name of Christ? The reason of this may be taken up in these two things.

1. There is no access for a sinful creature to God without a Mediator, Isa. 59:2. John 14:6. Sin has set us at a distance from God, and has bolted the door of our access to him, that it is beyond our power, or that of any creature, to open it for us. His justice staves off the criminal, his holiness the unclean creature, without there be an acceptable person to go betwixt him and us. Our God is a consuming fire: and so there is no immediate access for a sinner to him.

2. And there is none appointed nor fit for that work but Christ, 1 Tim. 2:5. It is he alone who is our great High Priest. None but he has satisfied justice for our sins. And as he is the only Mediator of redemption, so he is the only Mediator of intercession, 1 John 2:1. 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' The sweet savour of his merit alone is capable to procure acceptance to our prayers, in themselves unsavoury, Rev. 8:3, 4.

FOURTHLY, By whose assistance is acceptable prayer performed? By the help of the Holy Spirit, Gal. 4:6. Rom. 8:26. There are two sorts of prayers. (1.) A prayer wrought out by virtue of a gift of knowledge and utterance. This is bestowed on many reprobates, and that gift may be useful to others, and to the church. But as it is merely of that sort, it is not accepted, nor does Christ put it in before the Father for acceptance. For, (2.) There is a prayer wrought in men by virtue of the Holy Spirit, Zech. 12:10. 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications:' and that is the only acceptable prayer to God,

Jam. 5:16. effectual, Gr. inwrought. The right praying is praying in the Spirit. It is a gale blowing from heaven, the breathing of the Spirit in the saints, that carries them out in the prayer, which comes the length of the throne. Now, the Spirit helps to pray,

1. As a teaching and instructing Spirit, affording proper matter of prayer, causing us to know what we pray for, Rom. 8:26 forecited; enlightening the mind in the knowledge of our needs, and those of others; bringing into our remembrance these things, suggesting them to us according to the word, together with the promises of God, on which prayer is grounded, John 14:26. 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost,—shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.' Hence it is that the saints are sometimes carried out in prayer for things which they had no view of before, and carried by some things they had.

2. As a quickening, exciting Spirit, Rom. 8:26; the Spirit qualifying the soul with praying graces and affections, working in the praying person sense of needs, faith, fervency, humility, &c. Psal. 10:17. 'Thou wilt prepare their heart.' The man may go to his knees in a very unprepared frame for prayer, yet the Spirit blowing, he is helped. It is for this reason the Spirit is said to make intercession for us, namely, in so far as he teaches and quickens, puts us in a praying frame, and draws our petitions, as it were, which the Mediator presents.

This praying with the help of the Spirit is peculiar to the saints, James 5:16; yet they have not that help at all times, nor always in the same measure; for sometimes the Spirit, being provoked, departs, and they are left in a withered condition. So there is great need to look for a breathing, and pant for it, when we are to go to duty: for if there be not a gale, we will tug at the oars but heartlessly.

Let no man think that a readiness and volubility of expression in prayer, is always the effect of the Spirit's assistance. For that may be the product of a gift, and of the common operations of the Spirit,

removing the impediment of the exercise of it. And it is evident one may be scarce of words, and have groans instead of them, while the Spirit helps him to pray, Rom. 8:26. Neither is every flood of affections in prayer, the effect of the Spirit of prayer. There are of those which puff up a man, but make him never a whit more holy, tender in his walk, &c. But the influences of the Spirit never miss to be humbling but sanctifying. Hence says David, 'Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee,' 1 Chron. 29:14; and says the apostle, 'We have no confidence in the flesh,' Phil. 3:3.

FIFTHLY, For whom must we pray?

First, Negatively.

1. Not for the dead. David ceased praying for his child when once dead, 2 Sam. 12:21–23. It is vain and useless; for as the tree falls, it must lie. We have neither precept nor promise about it; and it was raised upon the false opinion of purgatory. But the dead are in an unalterable state, Heb. 9:27. 'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.'

2. Nor for those who are known to have sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost, 1 John 5:16 for God has declared that sin to be unpardonable. This is very rare, and therefore one would beware of rashness in this matter.

Secondly, Positively.

1. In general, we are to pray for all sorts of men living, 'for kings, and all that are in authority,' 1 Tim. 2:1, 2 for Christians, Jews, Mahometans, Pagans, noble and ignoble, &c. They are capable of God's grace and favour, and we are to desire it for them. But we are not to pray for every particular person whatsoever, 1 John 5:16. 'There is a sin unto death; I do not say he shall pray for it.' So that it is an unwarrantable petition, that God would have mercy on, and

save all mankind, for the contrary of that is revealed. Yea, we should pray for all sorts of men who shall live hereafter, as our Lord did, John 17:20. 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.' But,

2. In particular, we are to pray, not only for ourselves, as Jacob did for deliverance from the hand of his brother Esau, Gen. 32:11 but for,

(1.) The whole church of Christ upon earth. Hence says the text, Praying always with all prayer,—and supplication for all saints. To no party must we confine the communion of prayers, to whom God has not confined his grace. All the members of the mystical body must share particularly in our prayers, because they are the members of Christ, whatever difference be betwixt us and them in lesser things. The sympathy betwixt the members of the same body of our Lord requires this. And it is a sad sign not to be so affected, Amos 6:6. 'They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.'

(2.) Magistrates: 'Kings, and all that are in authority,' 1 Tim. 2:2. It was about 300 years after Christ ere the magistrates were Christians, nevertheless the apostle bids pray for them; because the quiet and peace of the commonwealth and kingdom depends much on their management; and infidelity, or indifference in religion, does not make void the magistrate's just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him. Their hearts are in the Lord's hand, Prov. 21:1. Their influence is great, so is their work, and so are their temptations; and if they be evil men, there is the more need to be earnest with God on their behalf. Let us bless God that we have a Protestant King on the throne, remembering how seasonably the Lord sent him, and how much depends on his safety, and the safety of his royal family.

(3.) Ministers, Col. 4:3. Psal. 132:9. There is a near relation betwixt the people of God and their ministers. They have a weighty work in their hands, which, if it misgive, will not only be their own loss, but the people's. People may have a minister so straitened, as to do them

no good, Col. 4:3. Though he be not so, yet he may be useless to them: therefore says the apostle, 1 Thess. 5:25. 'Brethren, pray for us.' I leave it with that, Rom. 15:30. 'Now I beseech you, brethren for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.'

(4.) Our Christian acquaintance, Jam. 5:16. 'Pray one for another.' Communion of prayers is a special benefit of Christian friendship and acquaintance. And it is no small mercy and encouragement to have interest in their prayers, who have interest at the throne of grace.

(5.) The place and congregation we live in, and are members of. The captives at Babylon were to pray for the place they lived in, Jer. 29:7 how much more should we pray for a Christian congregation whereof we are members? The better it be with them, it will be the better with you; so contrariwise.

(6.) Our families and relations. The nearer any stand related to us, we have the more need to be concerned for them at the throne of grace. We find Job sacrificing for his family, Job 1:5 a master praying for his servant, 2 Kings 6:17 and a servant for his master, Gen. 29:12.

(7.) Lastly, We must pray for our enemies, Matth. 5:44. This is hardest to bring men to. But we have the express command of Christ for it, and his example, Luke 23:34 followed by the martyr Stephen, Acts 7:60. Nay, forgiving them is necessary to our forgiveness: 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.' There may be much selfishness in praying for those that love us; but that kindly concern for our enemies makes us liker God, Matth. 5:45.

SIXTHLY, For what we are to pray?

We are to pray for things agreeable to God's revealed will, and for such things only, 1 John 5:14. 'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we seek any thing according to his will, he heareth us.' We may not present unto God unlawful desires, nor

petitions in favour of our lust, Jam. 4:3. These must needs be an abomination, and a daring affront to a holy God. And indeed wicked things are so much the more wicked, as they are brought into our addresses to a holy God.

The matter of our prayers must be regulated by the word of God, wherein he has shewn what is pleasing to him, and what is not so. The signification of God's will and good pleasure as to the good to be bestowed on men, and our prayers, are to be of equal extent. Wherefore, let us see that whatever we pray for be within the compass of the command or the promise.

Such are all things tending to the glory of God, Matth. 6:9 or to the welfare of the church, Psal. 122:6; to our own good, temporal, spiritual, or eternal, Matth. 7:11; or that of others, Psal. 125:4.

SEVENTHLY, How are we to pray, if we would pray rightly and acceptably?

1. Understandingly, understanding what we say, 1 Cor. 14:15. Therefore they must be in a known tongue. And to repeat words before God, while we know not what they mean, can never be prayer indeed.

2. Reverently, Eccl. 5:1. We must maintain an outward reverence in expression, voice, and gesture; since in prayer we are before the great God: an inward reverence especially, having an awful apprehension of the majesty of God before whom we appear, Psal. 89:7. Heb. 12:28. Fear and trembling becomes a creature, much more a guilty creature, before a holy God. And fearless presumptuous addresses to God are the produce of a hard heart.

3. Humbly, Psal. 10:17 with a deep sense of our own unworthiness and sinfulness on our spirits. In prayer we come to beg, not to buy or demand our right, and therefore should be sensible of unworthiness, Gen. 32:10; and the more grace, the more unworthy will we be in our own eyes, Gen. 18:27. And going to God, we must turn our eyes

inward, with the Publican (Luke 18:14), on our own evils of heart and life.

4. Feelingly, being deeply affected with a sense of our needs, like the prodigal, Luke 15:17, 18, 19. Alas! what does it avail to go to God with an insensible heart; to sit down at his table without spiritual hunger; to come to his door rich and increased with goods, in our own conceit! Such are sent empty away. Therefore it is a piece of very necessary preparation for prayer, to look over our wants, ere we go to prayer.

5. Believingly, Matth. 21:22. 'All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.' He who prays acceptably must be endued with saving faith, Heb. 11:6. An unbeliever cannot pray acceptably, Rom. 10:14. Hence the prayers of the unrenewed man are all lost in respect of gracious acceptance. Moreover, the believer must be in the exercise of faith in prayer, which must be mixed with faith.

One must have a faith of particular confidence in prayer, as to the things prayed for, Mark 11:24. 'What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall receive them.' For where that is altogether wanting, the prayer can never be accepted, Jam. 1:6. 'Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.' Since it must needs be highly dishonouring to God, to come to him to ask, without any expectation from, or trust in him, as to what is asked.

Quest. How may one have that faith? Ans. By applying the promises, and believing them. If the things be absolutely necessary, the promise makes these very things sure to them who come to God through Christ for them, as peace, pardon, &c. If they be not, then the promise secures God's doing the best, that either he will give the very thing desired, or what is as good. And we are to believe accordingly.

6. Sincerely, Psal. 145:18. Hypocrisy and dissimulation in prayer, when the heart goes not along with the lips, mars the acceptance of prayers. There are feigned lips, Psal. 17:1 when the affections do not keep pace with the words in prayer: when sin is confessed, but the heart not humbled under it; petitions are put up, but no serious desire of the things asked. See Jer. 29:13.

7. Fervently, Jam. 5:16. Cold, lifeless, and formal prayers, are not of the right stamp. We should, as in a most weighty matter, be boiling hot, Rom. 12:11. Importunity in prayer is most pleasing to God. It consists not in a multitude of words, Matth. 6:7; but in a holy earnestness of heart to be heard, Psal. 143:7; and pleading with the Lord, by allowable arguments, as one who is in deep earnest, Job 23:4. A heart warmed by a live-coal from God's altar will produce this.

8. Watchfully, watching unto prayer, as in the text; taking heed to our spirits, that they do not wander. Wandering thoughts in prayer mar many prayers. They come on like the fowls on the carcase, and will devour it, if not driven away. A carnal frame of heart is the mother of them, and rash indeliberate approaches to God help them forward.

In that case one should be like the builders of the wall, having the trowel in the one hand, and the sword in the other, resolutely to resist vain thoughts, and refuse to harbour them. Nay, turn the cannon on the enemy, consider them as affording new matter of humiliation, and a clamant occasion of plying the throne of grace more closely. If they be striven against, they will not mar your acceptance; but if not they will.

9. Perseveringly; watching thereunto with all perseverance, as in the text. When we have tabled our suit before the throne, we must not let it fall, but insist upon it, Luke 18:1. Hold on, with one petition, one prayer, on the back of another, till it be granted, Isa. 62:1. 'In due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not.'

Lastly, Dependingly, waiting upon the Lord with humble submission to his holy will, and looking for an answer, Micah 7:7. We must come away in a waiting depending frame. No wonder those prayers be not regarded, which we never look after, and are not concerned for the answer of.

EIGHTHLY, Are all such prayers accepted, heard, and answered?

1. An unrenewed man cannot thus pray, neither are such a one's prayers at any time accepted, Prov. 15:8. 'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,' John 9:31. 'God heareth not sinners.'

2. God's own people do not always thus pray, neither are all their prayers accepted. For, says the Psalmist, Psal. 66:18. 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.'

3. But all such prayers, being the produce of God's Spirit in the saints, are presented by the Mediator; and are accepted, heard, and answered by the Father, though not presently answered, Psal. 22:2 yet they shall be answered in due time, either by granting the very thing desired, 1 John 5:15 or something as good, Gen. 17:18, 19. 2 Cor. 12:8, 9.

SECONDLY, The second part of prayer is confession of our sins. Here we shall show,

1. What sins we are to confess.

2. The necessity of confession.

3. How we are to confess sin.

First, The sins we are to confess are, original and actual sins, sins of omission, commission, heart, lip, and life, Psal. 51:4, 5. In a word, all our sins, so far as we are capable, (for 'who can understand his errors?' Psal. 19:12.) but especially those which most wound the conscience, we are to be particular in, with their aggravations.

Secondly, Let us consider the necessity of confession. (1.) It is necessary to clear the Lord's justice in proceeding against us, Psal. 51:4. 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.' (2.) The nature of the thing requires it, in order to obtain pardoning mercy, Prov. 28:13. 'Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy.'

Thirdly, How are we to confess sin?

1. Fully, without hiding any thing wilfully, Prov. 28:13. 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper.' God knows all our sins, and all the circumstances of them! so that it is in vain to mince our confession, and it speaks a heart not duly humbled.
2. Freely and voluntarily, pouring out the heart like water, and not merely making the confession as extorted. Whenever grace touches the heart, it will make it come freely.
3. Sincerely, confessing it with shame, sorrow, hatred of it, and a real purpose of reformation; otherwise it is but a mock confession.

Thirdly, The third part of prayer is thanksgiving for mercies. Here I shall shortly shew,

1. What is the matter of this thanksgiving.
2. The necessity of it.
3. How we should give thanks.

First, The matter of it is,

1. Spiritual mercies, Eph. 1:3. These are mercies for our souls, and lead to everlasting happiness; and therefore are most to be prized. They challenge the warmest and the most grateful acknowledgments from all who have received them.

2. Temporal mercies from the womb till now, Psal. 139:14. These call for the most thankful acknowledgments every day, for they are new every morning. And we ought to be thankful for mercies conferred, not only on ourselves, but also on others, particular persons or societies. So did the apostle, as to Philemon, Phil. ver. 4. 'I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers.' And so he did as to the Philippians, chap. 1:3. 'I thank my God, upon every remembrance of you.'

Secondly, Let us consider the necessity of thanksgiving.

1. It is all that we can render to God for good or benefits received, Hos. 14:2 namely, to acknowledge debt, and be thankful. Ingratitude among men is reckoned a great sin and scandal, and fixes an odious character on the person: but how much greater a sin and scandalous offence is it to be unthankful to God for the mercies which we enjoy, and that we never deserved at his bountiful hand! It is the character of heathens, Rom. 1:21. O let it not be that of Christians!

2. It is the way to get more. Unthankfulness mars the course of divine communications; but to the thankful it is opened, Phil. 4:6. Ingratitude among men provokes the liberal person to withhold his hand; and so does it provoke the holy God, the giver of all good, to restrain his favours. Alas! it is more natural to us to ask than to give thanks. Among ten seekers (the lepers), whom Christ cured of a very inveterate disease, there was but one thanker; and he is specially noticed in the gospel-history. We should never beg a mercy from the Lord, without heartily thanking him for all we have formerly received, as this is the ready way to procure more.

Thirdly, How should we give thanks? With enlarged hearts, wondering at undeserved goodness; with deep humility for mercies conferred on such mean and unworthy creatures; with hearty resolutions to improve them for God's glory and honour; and with warm desires to receive more favours from the hands of God, our bountiful benefactor.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. To live without prayer is a godless and graceless life. It is no better than the life of beasts, unsuitable to the rational nature of man, contrary to the design and end of his creation, and highly unbecoming one who is a candidate for immortality. It exposes the sinner to the severest strokes of God's justice; and, persisted in, will land him in hell. O let us all be excited to a life of prayer, remembering that we cannot be Christians without it. To pretend to be a Christian, and not to live a life of prayer, is a palpable contradiction.

2. The missing of the answers of prayer is our own fault, we pray amiss. If we always prayed in faith, and in the manner formerly observed, we would not be disappointed. Let us then be induced to pray in a right manner, and wait particularly on the Lord for gracious acceptance, and a favourable answer.

3. It is through Jesus Christ that the communication with heaven is opened and obtained. Let us then pray in his name, depend upon his intercession, and present all our petitions to God through him; for him the Father heareth always.

4. We need the Spirit of prayer, in order to our praying aright. Let us then cry incessantly for the Holy Spirit, and his influences; for we know not what to pray for as we ought. Let us look for his quickening influences to quicken our dead hearts, and warm our frozen affections, that we may send up our hearts unto God, and wing our desires to heaven.

5. Be exhorted to give yourselves unto prayer in all the sorts of it. Be men of prayer, as David was, Psal. 119:164. 'Seven times a-day do I praise thee.' How may this shame many Christians who pray but twice a-day? And how does it condemn all who restrain prayer before the Lord? O let us be induced to make conscience of this important and delightful duty; without the exercise of which, we behave no

better than the beasts that perish, and are a company of ungrateful monsters, that shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God. Pray evening and morning, and at all convenient seasons. Be always in a praying frame, and be devout and lively in all your applications to the throne of grace. Omit no season of it, not even amidst your daily employments; for even then ye may send forth pious thoughts towards heaven, and maintain communion with God while you are engaged in your daily labours: 'Pray without ceasing.'

I might have spoken of occasional and stated prayer; of public, private, and secret prayer; and of ordinary and extraordinary; but I shall drop all these, and only give you next a discourse on secret prayer.

A DISCOURSE ON SECRET PRAYER

MATTH. 6:6.—But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

HAVING opened unto you the nature of prayer in general, before I proceed to the explanation of the Lord's prayer, it will not be improper to discourse a little of that too much neglected duty, secret prayer; concerning which our blessed Lord gives directions in this passage of scripture. And this he does negatively, ver. 5 cautioning against performing that important duty with vanity and ostentation, to gain the applause of men. (2.) Positively, in the text. Wherein consider,

1. The duty itself urged by the Lord. And in it we may observe,

- (1.) The duty supposed: When thou prayest. That this is to be understood only of secret prayer, is manifest from the text, and the

preceding verse. Public prayer cannot be meant; for where else is that to be performed but in the congregation? Not family-prayer, which is not performed in a closet, and which must be done by more than one. Not ejaculatory prayer, which may be done any where, in any company, and whatever one be doing, as in the case of Nehemiah, chap. 2:4. Therefore we must understand here solemn secret prayer; which, in the text, the Lord takes it for granted that his disciples made conscience of.

(2.) The place to be chosen for it: Enter into thy closet; that is, a secret place, where you may be out of the view of others: for secret prayers are not to be restrained to secret chambers, as Christ's praying on a mountain does evidence.

(3.) The care that we should take lest our secret place become public: Shut thy door, so as others may not see thee, and so thou fall a sacrifice to hypocrisy, vanity and ostentation.

(4.) The duty itself commanded: Pray to thy Father which is in secret. Where we have, [1.] The object of prayer, thy Father, namely in Christ; intimating to us, that when we go to God, we should go to him as he is our Father in Christ, able and ready to help us, and reconciled to us in him. [2.] A designation which the Father gets, which is in secret; who knows as well what thou sayest in a secret place as what thou sayest in public; for he is omniscient and omnipresent.

2. The motive whereby he presseth secret prayer, viz. God's reward, who will openly reward service done in secret, which the world knows not of. And those who make conscience of this duty in faith and fervency, are no strangers to those rewards and advantages that are to be met with in this heavenly traffic.

The text affords the following doctrine.

DOCT. 'Secret prayer is a necessary duty incumbent on all.'

In discoursing from this subject, I shall,

I. Confirm the doctrine.

II. Shew the necessity of secret prayer.

III. Answer some cases relating to this duty, in order to clear it further to you.

IV. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to confirm the doctrine, or shew that secret prayer is a necessary duty incumbent on all. This will be clear, if ye consider,

1. Christ's express command in the text, which is to us instead of all reasons. His will is a sufficient ground of our duty. He commands nothing but what is just and right in itself, good for us, and conducive to his glory. And the command of God should be a prevalent motive with all to practise constantly this duty, which is attended with so much pleasure and profit.

2. The Spirit of God, by the apostle, Eph. 6:18 calls for it, 'Pray with all praying,' viz. all sorts of prayer, of which secret prayer is one. There are many exhortations to this duty in holy scripture, which manifestly shew the importance and necessity of it: such as that, 1 Thess. 5:17. 'Pray without ceasing;' which must denote secret prayer, as well as other kinds of that exercise.

3. The practice of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath set a fair and striking example of this duty to all his followers. He was in strict propriety a man of prayer, and spent much time in this delightful exercise; as we may see from Matth. 14:23. 'And when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.' Mark 1:35. 'And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.' Thus he retired from his public labours to converse in secret with his heavenly

Father, and prevented the dawning of the day to hold communion with heaven. Compare 1 John 2:6. 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.' The neglect of secret prayer is an incontestible evidence of one's being a stranger to Christ.

4. The practice of the saints of God, who were all diligent in the performance of this excellent duty. Thus the Psalmist says, Psal. 5:3. 'My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.' And how often this holy man was employed in this exercise, he tells us, Psal. 55:17. 'Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.' Which practice of his may make even the best of us blush, who usually confine our secret devotions to the morning and evening, and perhaps on very slight occasions, intermit sometimes one of these seasons. But this pious man, though a crowned head, and involved in much business, was yet oftener at the throne of grace; for he says, Psal. 119:164. 'Seven times a-day I will praise thee.' O that we could imitate so noble an example of sequestration and retirement from the world! Thus also Daniel 'kneeled upon his knees three times a-day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God,' chap. 6:10 and that at a time when prayer to God was made a capital crime. Thus also we find that Cornelius the Roman centurion, a proselyte to the Jewish religion, was one that 'prayed to God always,' Acts 10:2; and that it was secret, and not family-prayer in which he was employed, when the angel appeared to him, is evident from ver. 7; for on the departure of the heavenly messenger from him, who certainly spoke to him in a retired chamber, he called some of his domestics, to dispatch them for Peter to come to him, as the angel had directed. Thus likewise we find, that good king Hezekiah was no stranger to this delightful exercise; for when the prophet Isaiah was sent with a heavy message to him, announcing his death, 'he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord,' Isa. 38:1, 2. Compare Cant. 1:7. And indeed to which of the saints can we turn in any age who neglected this duty? Habitual neglect of prayer is not the spot of God's children. No

sooner does grace take possession of the soul of any person, but behold that person will pray, as Saul did at Damascus, after the extraordinary appearance of the Lord Jesus to him on his journey to that city, Acts 9:11.

Thus we have express divine precepts, apostolical injunctions, and the approved practice of our Lord Jesus, and of all the saints, to recommend this duty to us; and wo unto us if we neglect it.

II. I proceed to shew the necessity of secret prayer. It is not necessary in regard of merit, as if we could procure heaven by it. The only ground of eternal life in the mansions of bliss is the righteousness of a crucified Redeemer. Beggars pay no debts, but confess insufficiency, saying with the prophet, Dan. 9:5. 'We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments.' But it is necessary,

1. In regard of the command of God. He by a plain and express command requires it; and that command binds it as a necessary duty upon us. To neglect it, therefore, is a direct violation of the command of the great God and Lawgiver; and to make conscience of it is a necessary and proper act of obedience to the divine will.

2. To give God the glory of his omniscience and omnipresence. When we pray to our Father which is in secret, we plainly declare, that we believe he knows and sees all things, that the darkness and the light are alike unto him; and that he is the witness and inspector of all our actions, and will call us to an account for all our thoughts, words, and actions, which are well known to him.

3. To evidence our sincerity, that it is not to be seen of men that we pray; that we are not actuated from motives of ostentation and vain-glory, but from regard to the divine command, and a sincere desire to serve God; though indeed it will not hold that all such as pray in secret are sincere; for, alas! men may be very assiduous in this duty,

and yet be far from being sincere Christians, or accepted of God therein.

4. In regard that none know our case so well as ourselves: and therefore, though the master of the family pray in the family, yet we ought to pray by ourselves, in order to make known our particular case and wants unto God, which none other can know, and to ask such blessings and mercies of him as we stand in need of, and are suitable to our circumstances.

5. In regard that, if we know our own hearts, we cannot but have somewhat to say unto the Lord, that we cannot, nor would it be at all proper to say before others, respecting both confession of sins and supplication for mercies. Hence the spouse says, Cant. 7:11, 12. 'Come, my Beloved, let us go forth unto the field: let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards, let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.'

6. In regard of our wants continually recurring on our hands, and daily and hourly temptations, that may call for this exercise, when family-prayer cannot be had. What man is so well supplied, both as to temporal and spiritual blessings, as to have no occasion for asking supplies from above? Man is a needy and indigent creature in all respects; as a creature he lives on the bounties of providence, and as a Christian on the grace which is in Christ Jesus; and therefore he must daily apply to the throne of grace for necessary supplies in both. And as we are daily surrounded with temptations, and have no strength to resist or repel them, we must fetch in strength from God in Christ by prayer, lest we fall and be overcome by the temptations in our way.

Thus it appears from these considerations, that prayer is a necessary duty incumbent on all. And surely all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious will make conscience of this important and useful exercise.

III. I proceed to answer some cases concerning this duty, which will tend to clear it further unto you.

Quest. 1. What is the proper season of this duty of secret prayer? or when are we called to this exercise?

Ans. 1. We are doubtless to be very frequent in this duty. Thus we are called to 'pray always,' Eph. 6:18 and 'without ceasing,' 1 Thess. 5:17 that is, at all proper times, and to be continually in a praying frame, or to pray inwardly, though we utter not a word with our lips.

2. Whenever God calls us to it, putting an opportunity in our hands, and moving and inciting us to it, then we are to go about it. Thus, when the Lord Jesus says, 'Seek ye my face;' our hearts should say unto him, 'Thy face, Lord, will we seek,' Psal. 27:8. And thus we have daily calls and invitations to this duty, which we should carefully regard, and conscientiously embrace, lest we quench the Spirit, and provoke the Lord to harden our hearts from his fear.

3. The saints in scripture have sometimes been more, sometimes less frequent in this exercise. Thus David was sometimes employed thrice, sometimes seven times a-day in prayer, Psal. 55:17, and 119:164 and Daniel three times, even at a very perilous juncture, Dan. 6:10. From whose practice the frequency of performing this duty evidently appears.

4. Morning and evening at least we should pray, and not neglect this duty. This appears from our Lord's practice, Mark 1:35. Matth. 14:23 both cited above; from the practice of the saints in scripture, Psal. 55:2 and 5:2 formerly quoted; and from the morning and evening sacrifice under the legal dispensation, which were daily offered, and should excite us to offer up unto God daily the morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and praise. And the very light of nature teaches us so much; that when we are preserved through the silent watches of the dark night, and from the perils we may be exposed unto in that gloomy season, we should acknowledge the goodness and kindness

of God therein; and that when we are preserved through the day, from the many snares and temptations we are liable to amidst the cares and distractions of our business, we should bless God for his preserving and protecting mercy, and commit ourselves, and all our concerns, into the hand of God, when we are going to take necessary rest, that we may fall asleep under a sense of his love, and may rise again to resume the business of our callings with his blessing and favour.

Quest. 2. What is the proper place for secret prayer?

Ans. A secret place is the most proper for this exercise; and though every body has not a closet, or retired apartment, into which he may go and shut the door, yet any place where he may be retired from the view and observation of others, answers the purpose; though in other respects it be a public place, yet if it be dark, and the voice kept low, it is justly a secret place. And to a place of that sort did our Lord retire for secret prayer, Matth. 14:23 perhaps not having proper conveniency in the place where he lodged all night. And indeed there is not a person but may meet with such a secret place every day, if he have a disposition for this exercise.

Quest. 3. What gesture are we to use in secret prayer?

Ans. 1. Holy scripture does not bind us to any gesture particularly: but we find these four gestures of the body in prayer spoken of there, viz. standing, Mark 11:25; lying along on the face, Matth. 26:39: kneeling, Dan. 6:10. Eph. 3:14: and sitting, 2 Sam. 7:18.

2. Whatever the gesture be, let it be a reverent one, that may express a humble and reverent frame of spirit. Hence we are commanded to 'glorify God in our bodies.' 1 Cor. 6:20.

3. I shall say these two things for the further determination of this question. (1.) Let it be such a gesture as is conformable unto, or flows natively from, the present disposition of the heart. Thus in extraordinary case we find the saints were wont to fall on their faces,

2 Sam. 12:16. And so likewise did the Lord Jesus in the garden, on the eve of his sufferings, Matth. 26:39. (2.) Yet let it be always to edification; and let that gesture be chosen which is most conducive to devotion, and occasions least distraction in the duty: as if kneeling be dangerous for the body, and so may tend to disturb the mind, let another gesture be chosen that is not attended with these inconveniences: though kneeling is certainly the most eligible gesture, and expressive of that humility which must ever accompany this exercise. And the same thing we may say of closing the eyes, or keeping them open; though praying with the eyes shut is certainly to be preferred.

Quest. 4. What are we to say of the voice in secret prayer?

Ans. 1. The duty may be performed without using the voice, as was done by Moses in the strait the children of Israel were reduced to, after their escape from Egypt, when high and inaccessible mountains were on each side of them, the Red Sea before them, and the Egyptian host at their heels ready to cut them off. In this dilemma we find that great man crying to the Lord, though not with an audible voice, Exod. 14:15. Thus the voice is not to be used when people cannot do so without being heard, or when through weakness of body, or disquiet of mind, they are unfit for speaking with the tongue.

2. Yet where the voice may be used, and that with convenience and propriety, it should be made use of; and that, (1.) Because we are to glorify God with our bodies; and particularly our tongue is given to be an instrument of glorifying God; 'Awake, my glory,' says David, Psal. 57:8. (2.) Because the voice is of good use in secret prayer, to stir up the affections, and to stay the mind from wandering. Yet an affected loudness of the voice, whereby the secret prayer is made public, is a sad sign of great hypocrisy, which every serious Christian will guard against.

Quest. 5. Is secret prayer a sure mark of sincerity? or can one pray in secret, and yet be an hypocrite?

Ans. This is not out of the reach of the hypocrite? A hypocrite may come this length, and much farther. Judas was among the rest whom our Lord taught to pray in secret, and ye all know what was his fate. But though a hypocrite may continue a long time, nay, many years, in the practice of secret prayer; yet it is scarcely to be thought that he will always do so, if he live a long life: For, says Job, 'Will he [the hypocrite] always call upon God?' chap. 27:10. It is not to be thought that he will, as he has no communion with God in the duty. And therefore adds the same holy man, 'Will he always delight himself in the Almighty?' It is communion with God that is to be enjoyed in secret prayer, and the delight the soul has in it, that inclines a person to persevere in that exercise.

Inst. But if one pray not to be seen of men, can he be an hypocrite?

Ans. Yes, he may. For the terrors of God scalding the conscience, and a desire to lay the ferment thereby brought into the mind, may excite one to the duty, and put the applause of men entirely out of the mind. But secret prayer, conscientiously practised, and attended with manifestations of the Lord's love and favour, smiles of his face, returns of what was asked, continued faith and fervency, are undoubted signs of sincerity.

I come now to the improvement of this subject.

USE 1. Of information. It shews us,

1. That they have great reason to suspect themselves, who are strangers to this duty of secret prayer; and that on the following grounds.

- (1.) Because they come not the length of many hypocrites, who shall never come the length of heaven. There are many such who will not, for any consideration, omit their secret prayers every day: which is a

thing good in itself, but they make them the ground of their acceptance with God, and so will perish notwithstanding. How much more must those perish who live in the habitual neglect of this duty!

(2.) Because they look not like the saints, whose disposition has been to seek communion with God in secret, as in the case of the spouse, Cant. 7:11 and many others. What, can ye pretend to be saints, and yet live so very unlike them?

(3.) Because it seems they are very unacquainted with themselves, that knowing nothing to confess to, or ask of God, but what they can do before any. Did men know their misery and their wants, and had a suitable sense thereof, they would not be strangers to secret prayer.

(4.) Because it looks too hypocritical-like to have others to be witnesses to all our duties.

2. Then there is much hidden work in religion. True religion is not all exposed to the view of others. Attending on public ordinances in the church, and going the round of family-worship, is not that in which the whole of religion consists: for many may be diligent enough in these exercises, and yet strangers to vital heart-religion. But they that are truly religious in the eye of God, are such who not only perform outward duties, but worship God in spirit, and hold communion and intercourse with him in secret prayer, without which they can no more live, than without bread and water.

USE II. Of exhortation. Be exhorted then, all of you, to set about this duty of secret prayer. And this exhortation I address to you who never yet began this exercise, and to you who, though ye have perhaps formerly done something this way, yet now have left it off. To press this, I offer the following motives,

1. It is a piece of worship expressly commanded of God, in the text, and it is directly required by him, Eph. 6:18. Will ye then counteract God's express command? If ye do, it will be at your peril.

2. Are ye not engaged to this duty? Are not the vows of God upon you for the performance of it? Were ye not baptised in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to worship them, and that in all parts of worship, of which prayer is a principal one? Have not some of you been admitted to the Lord's table, when ye professed to renew your baptismal engagements? And perhaps some of you have sick-bed vows on you to that purpose.

3. Have ye not secret sins, secret wants, and secret temptations? and shall ye not have secret prayers adapted to each, requesting of the Lord the pardon of your secret sins, the supply of your secret wants, and grace to resist and overcome your secret temptations?

4. Lastly, This is your known duty; and therefore remember, that 'the servant that knew his master's will, but did it not, shall be beaten with double stripes.' Wherefore I charge you, as ye will answer to God at death and at judgment, and as you love your own souls, and would not eternally perish, to set about this necessary and important duty.

But some are ready to muster up a variety of objections against this duty, the chief of which I shall endeavour to obviate.

Object. 1. I have no time for secret prayer, for my work and business.

Ans. 1. This is thy greatest work, even the salvation of thy soul, in comparison of which all thy other work is a mere trifle: and wilt thou take time for thy other work, and not for this work, that challenges thy utmost care and attention? 2. Fools' haste is no speed. To rise out of bed, and to go immediately to secular work, is foolish cursed haste. How canst thou look for a blessing on thy work without prayer? 3. Rise the sooner every morning, that you may not be scrimped as to time for this exercise, as our blessed Lord did, Mark 1:35. How wilt thou answer to God at the great day, for spending that time in sleep, which thou shouldst have spent in secret prayer? Daniel would not omit this exercise, though at the hazard of his life.

Object. 2. We are so wearied with our work through the day, that we are not able to pray in the evening. Ans. 1. What difference is there betwixt you and the beasts that take their ease when their work is done, without any more ado? 2. You will take your meat for your bodies, though ever so weary; and why will ye not think of and provide meat for your perishing souls? John 4:6, 32. 3. Notwithstanding ye may be tired, do what ye are able. We are not commanded to tell you to make your prayers short or long; but by no means to neglect secret prayer altogether, which is very dangerous. But I suppose, that when you say your body is not able to subsist with secret prayer, that yet if ye could gain a sixpence at that very time, you would spend twice as much more time for that paltry gain; and yet slight the concerns of your souls, under this frivolous pretence.

Object. 3. We have no convenient place for secret prayer. Ans. Find out once a willing heart for this exercise, and I shall engage you for it you shall find a place. Are there not barns, byres, out-houses, and fields, for you to retire to? Will not these rise up and witness against thee that neglectest this duty, at the great day? For my part, I would rather go to prayer, even within a dwelling-house, in the place where the beasts stand, or behind a bed, or at the back of a house, ere I should neglect it. God requires all men to pray, but he does not require all men to have chambers and closets.

Object. 4. But there are prayers in our family, and I join therein; what needs more! Ans. Poor soul! hast thou no more to say of 'thyself to God, but what the master of the family says? Alas! thou knowest not thyself, and the dreadful case thou art in by nature; which if thou didst, thou wouldst not think joining in prayer with others enough. Thou thinkest it sufficient that the master of the family pray for thee, and the other members of his family, and thou liest by without concerning thyself about duty for thyself; wilt thou think it enough, that he go to heaven for thee, and thou be shut out for ever?

Object. 5. But (says the master of the family) I pray with my family, and I hope that is enough for me. Ans. In this command in the text, Christ has not excepted thee, neither dare I. Again, dost thou so well discharge family prayer, that thou hast no escapes or failures to be matter of secret prayer? I tell you plainly, that God will not have his worship halved: He will have either the whole or nothing. Being conscientious in family-prayer is good, but can never excuse the neglect of secret prayer, which is as much thy duty. Yea, the more thou art helped to discharge family-duty, the more wilt thou be inclined to the practice of secret duty. The false mother was for dividing the child, not the true one.

Object. 6. Some women that have children to nurse and wait on, think that frees them from this duty. Ans. It is a sad observation of many women, who, while they are unmarried, and are not involved in the cares and troubles of a family, have some profession and practice of religion; but as soon as they get a house to manage, and have the care of young children especially, they cast off all religion, as if they had no more concern therein. But surely the very sight of the child whom thou hast conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, should remind thee of thy original guilt and corruption, and incite thee to apply to the blood and Spirit of Christ for pardon and cleansing, and be a powerful spur to thee to set about this great duty of secret prayer. And remember, that the welfare of thy own soul, and that of the child, is more than that of the child's bodily welfare, which deserves but the second care in comparison of the other. I would not have you by any means to cast off the care of the young one's temporal welfare; but thou mayst so observe times and seasons, as thou mayst take time for this duty morning and evening, though it be not immediately after thou risest, or before thou liest down. Thou mayst even do it when thou art rocking the cradle, or suckling the child. Alas! it had been telling many, that they had had the womb that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck.

Object. 7. God knows the heart, and what needs so much ado about praying in secret, as if God knew not what we wanted, or what we

would be at, till we sit down on our knees, and tell him? Ans. God knows the heart of such an objector to be a graceless heart, and his end to be destruction, Matth. 7:15, 20; and his heart to be a foolish atheistical heart, that will not call upon God, Psal. 14:1. Again, what is this but to argue God's command to be foolish? He bids us pray, and you say it is needless. O daring presumption! Though the Lord not only knows your heart, but has a mind to give blessings to poor sinners, he will have you seek them by prayer: 'For these things,' says he, 'will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, that I may do it for them,' Ezek. 36:37. God never confers signal mercies on his people, without first pouring out on them the Spirit of faith and prayer, and determines them to seek ardently the very thing he has a mind to grant them. And this method is for the glory of his name, and for our real benefit.

Object. 8. Age and infirmity will not suffer me to go about that duty. Ans. Will it suffer you to do your business in the world, and will it not suffer you to manage your soul's business, which is of infinitely greater importance? It would seem, that the nearer we draw to the grave, the more active we should be in preparing for it. It were good, that old people would mind heaven more, and the world less, as they have so short a time to stay here. The concerns of the other world should mainly ingross their care and attention, and they should then redouble their diligence in improving their span of time, and doing that which perhaps they too much neglected in the days of health and vigour. 'The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness,' Prov. 16:31. 'But the sinner being an hundred years old, shall be accursed,' Isa. 65:20. Let this sound an alarm to all the old sinners among you, that ye may yet apply to the merciful Redeemer, who sets even some to work in the vineyard at the eleventh hour. It is sad to be tottering under the miseries and infirmities of old age, and to have no prospect of a happy landing. Fly then to Christ, thou old decrepit sinner, while his call reaches thee, lest thou speedily perish without remedy.

Object. 9. I am too young to mind secret prayer. Ans. You are too old never to have entered on God's service. Remember that Josiah, when he was but eight years old, began to seek the Lord God of his father David. Obadiah, Ahab's steward, feared the Lord greatly from his youth. John Baptist was sanctified from the womb; and so was the prophet Jeremiah. Timothy knew the holy scriptures from a child. You can never begin to be religious too soon. None ever repented that they sought the Lord; but all have repented that they did not begin to seek him sooner. You are as liable to death as the oldest person here, have a soul as precious as theirs, and as much need to mind your best and eternal interests as they. Up then and be doing, without putting off a moment longer.

Object. ult. I cannot pray. Ans. The truth is thou wilt not pray, Psal. 10:4. If thou hadst a will to the duty, thou wouldst soon learn. But if thou wouldst learn to pray, go to God that he may teach thee, as Christ taught the disciples; and consider the absolute need thou hast of divine instruction in this matter. Use the one talent, and God will increase it. Wherefore set about this weighty duty, and neglect it not. Think seriously with yourselves, whether those who are now in hell, and when they lived neglected secret prayer like you, would do so still if they were in the world again. I scarcely think they would. Pray now, therefore, lest ye repent your neglect, when it will be too late, and ye are tormented in the lake of fire and brimstone. Again, think with yourselves how you will get this criminal neglect digested on a death-bed, when ye are ready to leap into eternity, without having once prayed for God's mercy through Christ to your souls; and how you will get it digested before the awful tribunal of God, when he will drive you from his blessed presence for ever. Think with yourselves how precious time is, and what a sad business it is to spend it in pursuing the world and lying vanities, and neglecting communion with God, wherein lies the life of the soul. What! will ye delay it yet a while? O do it not! for delays are dangerous. Will ye be so foolish as to venture all to two or three words on a sick-bed or deathbed? Perhaps you will not get one, but may be hurried away in a moment. Consider that awful passage, Prov. 1:24–28. 'Because I have called

and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.'

Exhort. 2. Be frequent in this duty, morning and evening at least, and at other times, when your conveniency will allow, and go not only to it now and then. Consider,

1. God's express command, which ties you to pray always, continually, and without ceasing. This does not mean, that you should do nothing but pray, or spend your whole time in this exercise. No; but denotes frequency, and embracing every opportunity that offers for so delightful and profitable a duty. It says you should be always in a praying frame, never having your minds so much ingrossed in worldly concerns, as to be indisposed to call upon God in prayer.

2. Frequency in this duty is a good sign of a good frame and an excellent mean to maintain and preserve it. They who are not frequent in this exercise, do thereby shew that their frame and disposition is not spiritual, but carnal, much under the conduct of sense, and attachment to sensible things. Whereas, if a person were frequent in this duty, it would be a token of a heart weaned from the world, and much conversant in the things of God.

3. Lastly, It is dangerous to grow slack and remiss in this duty, as mournful experience has testified in the case of many. They who having been for years frequently employed in this heavenly exercise do at last turn careless, restrain prayer before the Lord, or but now and then bow a knee before him, do thereby declare they have lost the life and relish of the power of religion, and are in the high road to apostasy. There are not wanting instances of such having returned

with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Others have been made signal monuments of judgment, and set up as beacons to backsliders. And some who have had the root of the matter in them, have had such a storm raised in their consciences, as has made them a terror to themselves, and all around them; and it has cost them much and sore wrestling with God ere they recovered the light of his countenance. For the Lord's sake, then, and your own soul's sake, be frequent in this exercise, and grow not remiss therein, lest ye feel the vengeance of God's temple.

Exhort. 3. To parents and masters of families. I beseech and intreat you by the mercies of God, by the love ye bear to the Lord Jesus, and the regard ye have to the souls of your children and servants, not only to pray in secret yourselves, but by all the means that are competent to you, by command, advice, exhortation, &c. to stir them up to this duty of secret prayer. For motives consider,

1. It was the practice of John the Baptist, yea, and of Christ himself, the great Prophet of the church, Luke 11:1. Thus this duty comes recommended by the best authority, and the most excellent approved patterns. Christ taught and urged his disciples to pray, and for that end gave them an excellent directory, suited to their then state; and which ye would do well to make your rule in instructing your children and servants.

2. God expressly commands it, Deut. 6:7. 'Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.' Thus they were to be daily employed in this duty, not only to let their children know what they were bound to do, but to press them to the performance of it. And this command being of moral obligation, is equally incumbent upon you that are Christian parents and masters of families; and ye have far superior advantages for this exercise than the Israelites had, a small part of the Bible having been then written; whereas ye have the whole of it among your hands.

3. God commends the practice in Abraham, Gen. 18:19. 'I know him,' says Jehovah, 'that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.' Thus, if thou make conscience of this duty, thou wilt tread in the steps of the father of the faithful, and receive tokens of the divine approbation, by the Lord's blessing thy family, and prospering thy outward concerns, and be an example to others to excite them to their duty. This will be the ready way to have dutiful and affectionate children, and obedient and careful servants.

4. Consider the engagements which thou tookest on thee at the baptism of thy children, to train them up in the good and holy ways of the Lord; to inform them of their natural depravity, impotency, and aversion to what is good, of the method of salvation by the obedience and death of Christ; and to press them to yield themselves to the Lord, by taking hold of his covenant by faith. Thou became then engaged to instruct them in the principles of our holy religion, to shew them their duty to God and man, and to observe his ordinances and commandments. And canst thou fulfil these thy engagements, unless thou be at pains to instruct them, and especially to stir them up to the practice of secret prayer.

5. Lastly, Their souls are committed to thy charge; and if they perish through thy neglect, their blood will be required at thy hand. Ah! my friends, Papists and others will rise up in judgment against you, who take more pains on their children, to breed them up in their false and corrupt doctrines, and their idolatrous and superstitious courses, than ye to instruct them in the pure doctrines and precepts of religion. If thou now neglect their religious education and instruction, thy lost children and servants shall curse the day that ever they saw thy face, who tookest no more care of them than of thy beasts. Oh! let this melancholy consideration excite and stir thee up to thy duty now, lest thy children and servants rise up in judgment against thee, and be a dreadful addition to thy condemnation.

What shall we do then? may ye say.

1. As soon as they can speak perfectly, give them a few words to speak to God upon their knees every morning and evening, and see that they do so. Let these words consist of a short confession of sin, an acknowledgement of God's goodness in preservation, and an application for pardon through the blood of Jesus.

2. When they advance farther in years, give them the help of a form, composed chiefly in scripture-words, and particularly that which Christ taught his disciples. And be sure to vary and enlarge any form you give them, from time to time; and in a little time, by reading the Bible, and duly considering their own case and wants, they will be able to pray without a set form; for it is often observed, that where young ones make conscience of practising the helps that are given them, and take pleasure in the duty, the Holy Spirit strikes in with his assistance, and lays suitable matter of prayer before them; so that even some very young persons have been found to pray with great fluency and fervour, to the admiration of those who happened to overhear them.

3. Pray frequently with your children; which will be an excellent means to instruct them both as to the matter and manner of the duty, and have a powerful influence upon them to induce them to pray for themselves. And indeed I must say, if parents made more conscience of this practice, in praying with their children, the young ones would not discover such aversion to the duty as many do; nor would there be such a numerous fry of young prayerless sinners among us, who, though they have not learned to pray, yet are great proficient in speaking vain and idle words, and in cursing and swearing.

4. Furnish them daily with proper materials of prayer, which ye can extract from the Lord's word, your own observation of the state and temper of your souls, the disposition and inclination of your children, the sins and vanities they are most addicted to, your knowledge of their peculiar wants and desires, and what appears to be suitable to their circumstances and situation.

5. Lastly, Carefully observe, whether they perform this duty or not; that you may encourage them when they do well, and check and rebuke them when they neglect it. Shew them that you are influenced by a regard to the command and authority of God, and are actuated with a hearty zeal and concern for the salvation of their souls in all you do in this matter, whether respecting the encouragements and advices you give them, or the rebukes and chastisements you administer to them, in case of non-compliance, neglect, or careless performance of the duty enjoined. This will have no small influence upon them to comply with your instructions and directions, and by degrees conquer their aversion to the exercise; and you may come, through the divine blessing, to see the happy fruit of your labours and endeavours.

Thus I have endeavoured, as briefly as I could, to lay before you the nature, importance, and necessity, of this excellent duty of secret prayer, and have removed the most material objections that can be made against it. If any of you, then, shall continue in the habitual neglect of this exercise, and so perish, your blood will be upon your own head, for I have delivered my own soul. But I hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak: and I hope there will no more henceforth be a prayerless person among us. Which God of his infinite mercy, grant.

OF THE RULE OF DIRECTION IN PRAYER

MATTH. 6:9.—After this manner, therefore, pray ye, Our Father, &c.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ, in his sermon on the mount, whereof this chapter is a part, retrieves religion from the false doctrines, and the corrupt and hypocritical practices, which the Scribes and Pharisees brought into it. They were not wanting in the matter of external duties, but they were far from the right manner of performing them. Wherefore, in the first four verses, he teaches them the right manner of doing alms. In the next place, he teaches them the right manner of praying. He taxes two faults in the manner of praying: (1.) Hypocritical ostentation, ver. 5 and points them to the right manner in this. (2.) Idle multiplying of words, ver. 7, 8. In the text, for remedy of this fault, and others about prayer, the Lord, being to give us a prayer to serve for a pattern, and to direct us in praying, bids us 'pray after this manner;' i. e. in the manner following in the form of prayer here set down; not binding us to the very words, but to the manner of it, that we must pray after this manner, and to this purpose.

The right manner of performing the duty of prayer, is what God requires, and we should be concerned for. The Lord knows his people's weakness, and how ready they are to go wrong in this, and how much they need direction; and therefore gives this form and pattern of prayer, for their direction in that weighty duty: After this manner address yourselves to God in prayer. He had not left them without direction altogether before; they had the word formerly written, but this is added as a special rule of direction.

The text affords this doctrine:

DOCT. 'Though the whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer, yet the special rule of direction is that form of prayer, which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called the Lord's prayer.'

Here I shall shew,

I. That we need direction in prayer.

II. What rule God hath given for our direction therein.

III. Whether these rules are sufficient to enable us to pray acceptably.

IV. Deduce some inferences.

I am to shew, that we need direction in prayer. This is evident from,

1. God's greatness. It is to him who dwells in heaven that we must address ourselves in prayer: therefore, 'be not rash with thy mouth (says Solomon), nor let thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few,' Eccl. 5:2. Rash and fearless approaches speak unbecoming thoughts of God, and low thoughts of the throne in heaven, which one presents himself before. And to such may be said, 'These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes,' Psal. 50:21. Who of us, approaching the presence of our prince, to present our petition before him, would not seek direction as to the right and acceptable manner of doing it? How much more should we, who have petitions to present to him who is God of gods, and King of kings, ask direction as to the right manner of presenting our petitions?

2. Our own guiltiness, Luke 18:13. Whoever would be rash or careless in approaching his prince's presence, one would think that a rebel, a traitor, and a criminal, would see well to the manner of his address, and would be very cautious. This is our case, and therefore that

should be our way. Therefore the prodigal thinks before-hand what he will say to his offended father, Luke 15:18, 19.

3. The weight of the matter we go upon. Our errand to the throne is, to worship God, who 'will be sanctified in them that come nigh him, and before all the people will he be glorified,' Lev. 10:3 which is awful and solemn work, and gives ground for that question, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God,' Micah 6:6. It is to present our supplications for our needs for time and for eternity. And if he help us not, all the world cannot do it. Our souls lie at stake, eternity is before us; and to entreat with God on the business of eternity, is business that needs direction.

4. Our weakness and aptness to mistake and miscarry in the approach, Job 37:19. 'Teach us what we shall pray unto him: for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.' We have no skill to manage the weighty matter; and we will be persuaded of it, if we know ourselves. We are ready to go wrong in the matter of prayer, Rom. 8:26 to ask of God things not agreeable to his revealed will, being blinded with our own passions and prejudices, Luke 9:54. And we are apt to go wrong in the manner of prayer, by insincerity, formality, and carnality, Jam. 4:3. Isa. 64:7.

5. Lastly, The danger of mistaking and miscarrying in prayer, either of the ways. It may provoke the Lord against us, and bring down a curse instead of a blessing upon us, Mal. 1 ult. 'Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificed unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen,' Exod. 20:7. 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.' At least it will frustrate our prayers, so that they will be rejected and not heard, Jam. 4:3 our petitions cast over the bar. Or what we seek not agreeable to his will, may be given us with a vengeance, Psal. 106:15.

II. The second head is, What rule hath God given for our direction in prayer? Our gracious God has not left us without direction in that matter. We have from himself the rule which we are to walk by in our addresses to the throne: and how else could he know it? who else could teach us how guilty creatures should present their supplications to the most high God? And,

First, There is a general rule given us for that end; and that is the whole word of God, the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, in which God's will is revealed, as to all things to be believed and done by us, 1 John 5:14. By our Bible we may learn to pray; for there we are furnished with all sorts of helps and directions for this duty, as to matter, manner, and words; and therefore it is a complete directory for prayer.

1. It furnishes us abundantly with matter of prayer, in all the parts of it, petition, confession, &c. Psal. 51:4, 5. Phil. 4:6. And whose has the word of God dwelling richly in him, will not want matter for prayer, for himself or for others. There is a storehouse of it there, of great variety; and we are welcome to the use of it, agreeable to our own case.

2. It fully directs us as to the manner of prayer: as, for instance, that we must pray with sincerity, Heb. 10:22 with humility, Psal. 10:17 in faith, Jam. 1:6 and with fervency, Jam. 5:16. And there is no qualification necessary in prayer, but what we may learn from the holy word.

3. It furnishes us with the most fit words to be used in prayer. Do ye want words to express your desires before the Lord? He has given us his own words in the Bible, that we may use them according to our needs, Hos. 14:2.

Secondly, There is a special rule given us by Jesus Christ for that end, namely, that form of words which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called 'the Lord's prayer;' that excellent pattern and

example of prayer, composed by Jesus Christ himself for our direction in the text, which every Christian is obliged to receive with the utmost reverence, as the Lord's own word. But it was never imposed by Jesus Christ, or his apostles, as a set form to which his church is bound to pray in these very words, and no other. It is true, in the year 618, the Council of Toledo imposed it on the Clergy, under the pain of deposition; but then Antichrist had mounted the throne, and the Papists since have superstitiously abused it to this day. I would all Protestants could plead, Not guilty. To clear this matter,

1. The Lord's prayer is given us as a directory for prayer, a pattern and an example, by which we are to regulate our petitions, and make other prayers. This is clear from the text, After this manner pray ye, &c. And it is a most ample directory in few words, to be eyed by all praying persons, if studied and understood. There we are taught to pray in a known tongue, and without vain repetitions, to God only, and for things allowed; to have chief respect to the glory of God and our own advantage.

2. It may also be used as a prayer, so that it be done with understanding, faith, reverence, and other praying graces. So we own the very words may lawfully be used, Matth. 6:9 compared with Luke 11:2. See Larger Catechism, quest. 187 and the Directory for Public Worship, under the title, Of prayer after Sermon, parag. 5. Who can refuse this, since it is a piece of holy scripture, of the Lord's own word? And they who are so weak, as that they cannot conceive prayer, do well to use this holy form; though they should endeavour to make further progress in prayer. And sometimes knowing Christians, under great desertions, not able to conceive prayer, have used it with good success. But,

3. Our Lord hath not tied us to this very form of words when we pray to God. This is evident,

(1.) Because the prayers afterwards recorded in the scripture, were neither this form of words, nor yet concluded with it. Christ himself used it not in his prayer at Lazarus's grave, John 11:41; nor in his last prayer, John 17. Nor did his apostles, Acts 1:24; nor the church, Acts 4:24, &c.

(2.) This prayer is diversely set down by Matthew and Luke, the only two evangelists that make mention of it. And though it is obvious, that there is an entire harmony between them as to the matter and sense of the words; yet it is equally obvious, to all who compare them together, that there is some difference as to mode or manner of expression, particularly as to the fourth and fifth petitions; which certainly there would not have been, had it been designed for a form of prayer. In Luke, the fourth petition runs thus, 'Give us day by day our daily bread;' but in Matthew, it is thus expressed, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' The latter contains a petition for the supply of present wants; and the former for the supply of wants as they daily recur upon us: so that both accounts being compared together, we are directed to pray for those temporal blessings which we want at present, and for a supply of those we stand in need of as they daily recur: which shews a considerable difference in the expressions. In Luke, the fifth petition is, 'Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us;' whereas, in Matthew the expression is very different, viz. 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.' Again, Luke leaves out the doxology, 'For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen;' which Matthew adds. From whence it may be justly inferred, that our Lord's design in furnishing his disciples with this prayer, was not that they should confine themselves solely to the manner of expression used therein, without the least variation; for then undoubtedly the two evangelists would have recorded it in the very same words; but he rather intended it as a directory respecting the matter of prayer. So that it is impossible to keep by the form of words precisely, since it is not one. It is said, Luke 11:2. 'When ye pray say, &c. Here we are tied to the form of words, say our adversaries. Ans. By this phrase is to be understood the manner, viz. Say this on the matter, pray after this

manner. Compare Matth. 6:9. If it is to be understood otherwise, then, (1.) According to Matth. 10:7. 'Go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand;' the disciples' preaching was confined to these very words, which we are sure it was not. (2.) It would be unlawful to pray in any other words, which no Christian dare assert. (3.) Neither Papists nor Episcopalians stick to these words in Luke, but use the words in Matthew; by which they give up the cause.

Further, it may be observed, that our Saviour chiefly intended this prayer as a directory, respecting the matter of our petitions, rather than a form; because it does not explicitly contain all the parts of prayer, particularly confession of sin, and thankful acknowledgement of mercies. Again, there is no explicit or direct mention of the Mediator, in whose name we are to pray; nor of his obedience, sufferings, and intercession, on which the efficacy of our prayers is founded, and their success depends: which things are to be supplied from other parts of scripture; all which, taken together, give us a complete directory for prayer.

From the whole, I think it is evident, that a prayer formed upon the model of this excellent pattern, having the substance of the several petitions interspersed through it, though expressed in other words, is a true scriptural prayer; and that there is no necessity to conclude with the Lord's prayer. And therefore, I cannot but think, that Papists, and many Protestants, who conclude their prayers with the very words of the Lord's prayer, make a very superstitious use of it; causing people imagine, that the bare recital of the words of the Lord's prayer sanctifies their other prayers; and that no prayer can be accepted of God where this, I cannot but call it vain, repetition is omitted.

III. Whether are these rules sufficient to enable us to pray acceptably? Ans. They are sufficient in their kind, i. e. as external directions and helps. But besides, the inward grace and assistance of the Spirit are necessary for that end, Rom. 8:26.*

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

Inf. 1. How gracious and ready to hear prayer is our God, who has been pleased himself to direct us how to pray to him! We ought to be duly thankful to him for his great goodness in this matter, and diligently attend to the excellent rules he has given us on this head.

2. Let us acquaint ourselves with the blessed word, that contains such a full rule of practice as well as faith; and study the holy scriptures, that we may be the better instructed to pray. The bible is a noble guide for prayer, both for the matter and manner thereof; and if we diligently study it, we will not be in hazard of uttering any thing contrary to or inconsistent with it, or of using the words he has given us without knowledge or understanding.

3. Those who neglect prayer on any pretence, and particularly on that pretence that they cannot pray, or those who stick by a mere form, without endeavouring to improve in the duty, are highly culpable and inexcusable, as they have so many and such excellent helps scattered throughout the whole word of God. Herein they sin against God, and wrong their own souls.

Lastly, See the absolute necessity of prayer in the Christian life. Be convinced, that ye cannot be without that which the Lord is at so much pains to bring you to, by not only teaching you what to pray, but promising his Holy Spirit to assist you therein. Apply yourselves diligently to this duty, that you may be often with God, guiding yourselves therein by the direction of the word; and plead importunately for the quickening power and influence of the Holy Spirit, for his help and assistance. He will shew thee thy wants, to give thee matter of petition; thy sins, to give thee matter of confession; the mercies and blessings of God, to yield thee matter of thanksgiving; and the church's miseries and necessities, to furnish thee with matter of intercession.

THE PREFACE OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

MATTH. 6:9.—Our Father which art in heaven.

THE Lord's prayer consists of three parts, the preface, petitions, and conclusion. The preface is in the words which I have read, designing the object of worship, and particularly of prayer, namely, God himself. And we are directed to address ourselves in prayer to him, (1.) As a Father; (2.) As our Father; and (3.) As our Father in heaven.

The words afford this doctrine.

DOCT. 'If we would pray acceptably, we must address ourselves to the Lord in prayer, as our Father which is in heaven.'

Here I shall shew,

I. What our being directed to call God Father in prayer doth teach us.

II. What our being directed to call God our Father teaches us.

III. What we are taught by our being directed to address ourselves to God as our Father in heaven.

IV. Deduce some inferences.

I. I am to shew, what our being directed to call God Father in prayer does teach us. It teaches,

1. The children of God to be those who only can or are capable to pray acceptably: for they only can indeed call God Father. We cannot pray acceptably unless he be our Father, and we his children, namely, by regeneration and adoption, John 9:31. How can one plead the privileges of the family, if he be none of the members thereof, but of his father the devil, a stranger to the covenant of promise? Therefore, if we would pray aright, our state must first be changed, Jam. 5:16.

Quest. May none pray, then, who cannot call God, Father? Ans. There are two sorts of these.

(1.) Unregenerate persons, who are yet in the state of black nature, who have no ground to plead this saving relation to God. They may, yea, ought to pray, though they cannot pray acceptably; because prayer is the natural duty of all, which all are bound to, and the neglect of which God will punish them for, Jer. 10 ult. And prayer is not a sin, but a duty, though, as it is by them managed, it is turned into sin, as all other duties are. But the neglect of it is a greater sin.

Object. But it is needless for them to pray, since they cannot pray acceptably. Ans. No: for it is a mean of grace, and an ordinance of God; and though God have no respect to it as it is their performance, yet he may have respect to it as it is his own ordinance, and do good to them by it. The matter lies here; they are neither to continue in their sinful state, nor to satisfy themselves with their praying in that condition, but come out of it, and join themselves to God's family, and so they will come to pray acceptably.

(2.) The children of God who cannot discern their relation to him. These not only may pray, but pray acceptably, Psal. 103:13. 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.' But it is their duty to endeavour to assure their hearts before him, to advance their hunger and thirst after him to an actual acceptance of God to be their Father in Christ, and thereupon to believe he is their Father.

2. That it is through Jesus Christ we have access to God in prayer, Eph. 2:18, because it is through him alone that God becomes our Father; by him, for his sake, we are adopted into the family of heaven, John 1:12. When we hear that a company of guilty creatures, who stood before God as their terrible Judge, trembling for fear of his sentence of condemnation, change their note, and call him by the kindly name of Father, and confidently apply to him as children, we

must own this to be owing to the mediation, obedience, and death of his Son, John 20:17. And therefore,

3. That coming to God in prayer, we must come in the name of his Son, as the alone foundation of all our confidence in and expectation from God, John 14:13. Being married to the Son, we call God Father, and make bold in his house, by virtue of our relation to him, through our Lord and Husband. And on the continuance of this relation to Christ depends the continuance of this relation to his Father; and blessed be our immortal Husband, that the marriage with him can never be dissolved.

4. That the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of Christ in his people, is the principle of all acceptable praying to God; for by him it is that we are enabled to call God Father, Gal. 4:6 and therefore it is called 'inwrought prayer,' Jam. 5:16. He it is who excites his people to pray, moves them to go to God with their whole case, Psal. 27:8. He furnishes them with acceptable matter of prayer, Rom. 8:26 and with praying graces and affections, ib. And without the Spirit dwelling and acting in us, we cannot pray acceptably; and the more we have of the Spirit, we will pray the better.

5. That we should draw near to God in prayer with child-like dispositions and affections towards him.

(1.) Though he be very kind and admit us into familiarity with him, yet we must come with a holy reverence, Mal. 1:6. 'If I be a Father, where is mine honour?' Familiarity must not breed contempt. The character of a Father bears not only kindness, but reverence and fear in it. It is a mixture of love and awful authority; and the ingenuous child will regard both. Slavish fear is to be laid aside, but child-like reverence is necessary, Heb. 12:18.

(2.) Though we have offended God, and be under the marks of his displeasure, we must come with confidence, whatever we want, whatever we need, Eph. 3:12. While he bids us call him Father, he

requires of us confidence in him for the supply of all our wants. For fatherly affection is tender; the child's trouble touches the father nearly, and his interest is the father's interest, which is ground of confidence, Psal. 103:13 forecited, Isa. 63:9. 'Surely they are my children,' Zech. 2:8. 'He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye.'

(3.) That God is ready and willing to help us, and we should come to him in that confidence, Matth. 7:11. 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?' We should pour out our hearts into his bosom, in full confidence of his pity. Whom can a child expect help of, if not of a father? But no father has the bowels of compassion that God has towards his own. If the mother's tenderness towards the child be ordinarily greater than that of the father's, yet the Lord is still more, Isa. 49:15, 16. 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me.' And there is no such present help as he is.

Object. But is not the heavenly Father often far from helping his children? Ans. The children of God often think so, when their trouble is continued, and the deliverance comes not quickly. But he is their Father: therefore, (1.) He designs their good by all the hardships they meet with, Rom. 8:28. 'All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.' (2.) He pities them under their hardships. (3.) He is a God of judgment, knows best when to remove them, and will do it in due time. The child cries, 'Father, remove this affliction, or this trial, for it pains me.' The Father pities, but his judgment leaves it till it be good for the child that it be removed.

II. I proceed to shew, what our being directed to call God our Father teaches us.

Negatively, Not that we may not pray, saying, My Father, or that we are always to speak plurally, saying, We pray. For we have scripture-examples for praying in the singular number, Ezra 9:6. Luke 15:18, 19. But,

1. That we are not only to pray secretly by ourselves alone, but with others, joining with them in public and private. And hence may be brought no inconsiderable argument for that too much neglected duty of family-prayer; which the guilty would do well seriously to consider.

2. That we are to pray, not only for ourselves, but for others also, according to scripture example and precept, Acts 12:5. 1 Tim. 2:1, 2.

Praying with and for others is a piece of the communion of saints. And it is one of the privileges of God's family on earth, that they have the prayers of all the family there. God is a rich Father, who has blessings for all.

III. I come now to shew, what we are taught by our being directed to address ourselves to God as our Father in heaven.

1. That we are to eye his sovereign power and dominion over all, in our addresses to him, believing that he is able to help us in our greatest straits, that nothing is too hard for him but he can do whatsoever he will, Psal. 115:3. This is a noble ground for faith. Our fathers on earth may be unable to help; but our Father in heaven is almighty, and has power to help in every case.

2. That we should be filled with heavenly affections in prayer, Psal. 123:1. And that God's glorious greatness above us should strike an awe upon us in our approaches to him, Eccl. 5:2.

3. God's glorious and wonderful condescension, who vouchsafes to look from his throne in heaven unto us poor worms on earth, Isa. 66:1, 2.

4. Lastly, That we go to God as those who are strangers on this earth, and to whom heaven is home, because it is our Father's house, 1 Pet. 1:17 looking on this world as the place of our pilgrimage, and the men and manners of it as those we desire to leave, that we may be admitted into the society of angels, and consort with the spirits of just men made perfect.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

Inf. 1. Let us see here the miserable condition of those who have no ground to call God Father. They were never adopted into the family of heaven, but are of their father the devil, still members of the family of hell; and if they be not delivered from that hellish society, they must perish for ever. They have never yet prayed aright; for none can pray in a proper manner but those who have the Spirit of adoption. O cry to God, that he may be graciously pleased to translate you from the family of Satan into the family of God, and invest you with the privileges of the children of his family.

2. There is no right praying without faith. For without faith it is impossible to please God; and whatever it is not of faith is sin. We cannot call God Father, nor love or reverence him without faith: nor can we have any fellowship or communion with him, but by faith in him as our Father in Christ.

3. Hence see the happiness of the saints in the love of the Father, who is their Father; of the Son, who has made them the children of God; and of the Holy Spirit, who teaches them to call God their Father. How happy must those be who are so nearly related to all the three persons of the adorable Trinity, and are loved by, and have communion with each of them! O seek above all things to become the children of God, and ye shall be thus happy!

4. In no case a child of God is much to be pitied in the world, as long as he has a Father in heaven, to whom he can have access by prayer, at all times and in all cases, whether it be in life or in death, Micah

7:7. The believer's Father is a very present help in trouble; and when all help fails, he will never fail his own children; but will sanctify their troubles, be present with them in their greatest straits and afflictions, support them under them, and deliver them, as he sees it will be for his own glory, and their good. O! then, let us plead our interest in him as our Father, and engage his Spirit and presence to be ever with us, in every circumstance of life, and in the awful scenes of death and the grave, which we should view, not with terror, but with joy, as the messenger sent to convey us to the house of our Father which is in heaven.

THE FIRST PETITION

MATTH. 6:9.—Hallowed be thy name.

IN the Lord's prayer are six petitions, whereof three are for God's honour, and the other three for our own good. Those which concern the honour of God take the lead of what concerns our good; for it is highly reasonable that the creature's interest vail to God's interest. The first of these petitions relates to the name of God, and the hallowing of it, or sanctifying of it, that is, the glorifying of it. So the first petition is for the glory of God's name. This is the first of all put into our mouths, because of all things it should lie nearest our hearts.

In discoursing further from this subject, I shall shew,

I. What is meant by the name of God.

II. In what sense God's name is to be hallowed or sanctified.

III. Why hallowed or sanctified, rather than glorified, since it is evident, that it is the glorifying of his name that is intended.

IV. What is the import of this petition.

V. Why this is the first petition that is put by our Saviour into our mouths.

VI. Deduce some inferences.

I. I shall shew, what is meant by the name of God.

1. God himself. So names are put for persons, Rev. 3:4. 'Thou hast a few names in Sardis;' that is, a few persons. And the name of God is put for God himself, Deut. 28:58.—'that thou mayst fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD.' Accordingly, as we pray here that God's name may be hallowed, or sanctified, so he tells us 'he will be sanctified,' Lev. 10:3.

2. Every thing whereby he makes himself known to his creatures, Psal. 8:1. 'O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!' These are his names, Jehovah, I am, &c. though there is no word sufficient fully to express what he is; therefore his name is secret, wonderful, or incomprehensible, Jud. 13:18. His titles; Old Testament titles, as 'Hearer of prayer;' New Testament ones, as, 'The God of peace, the God of patience and consolation,' Rom. 15:33, 5. His attributes or perfections, Exod. 34:5. His word and ordinances, Psal. 147:19, 20 and his works, Job 36:14. In a special manner, Jesus Christ, by whom, and through whom, and in whom God manifests himself to us, John 1:18. And God's name is in him. But of the various senses in which the name of God is taken, I spoke more largely in the exposition of the third commandment.

II. I am to shew in what sense God's name is to be hallowed, or sanctified.

1. Not effectively, by making holy. 'Holy is his name.' He is infinitely holy, and cannot be made more holy. Whatever he is, whatever he says, whatever he does, is perfectly holy, and cannot be made more so, 1 John 1:5. Indeed he sanctifies his creatures by making them holy; but himself is originally and eternally holy, incapable of any addition.

2. But manifestly and declaratively, viz. when the holiness of his name is manifested, declared, shewn, and acknowledged, Isa. 29:23. 'They shall sanctify my name.' The holy name, in the dark parts of the earth, and in the dark men of the earth, is a candle under a bushel; it has a glorious light, but it is not seen: the bushel being removed, and the splendour breaking forth to open view, it is hallowed: men then shew, declare, and acknowledge it.

III. I come to shew, why God's name is said to be hallowed, or sanctified, rather than glorified, since it is evident that it is the glorifying his name that is intended.

1. Because God's holiness is his glory in a peculiar manner, Exod. 15:11.—'Glorious in holiness.' It is the glory of all his other attributes; it is the beauty of them all, and of every one of them. It is an universal attribute which runs through all the other. It is that vein of infinite purity, that goes through the several letters of his name, and makes them shine in glory. Wherein lies the glory of God's wisdom, power, mercy, &c. Why, it is in this, that his infinite wisdom is holy wisdom, his infinite power is holy power, &c. It is observed, that above thirty times in scripture God is called The holy One. And when the angels would pick out an attribute to glorify God most by, it is that of his holiness, Isa. 6:3.

2. Because it is the manifesting of his holiness, in the communicating of it to the creature, that brings in the greatest revenue of glory from the creature to God. The truth is, none are fit to glorify him but those who are holy, 1 Pet. 2:9. God stamps the image of his power and sovereign dominion upon one man, and sets him upon a throne; hence the phrase, Ye are gods. He stamps the image of his holiness on another, and sets him on a dunghill. I say, God's name is more glorified by the holy poor man, than by the unholy monarch. The unholy man may glorify God passively, but the holy man glorifies him actively. And in no other way can God be actively glorified, but by the creature's first receiving a stamp and impression of his holiness on the heart.

IV. I proceed to shew, what is the import of this petition.

To clear this, consider that God's name is hallowed two ways.

1. By himself, manifesting the glory of his own holy name. And this he doth in all the discoveries which he makes of himself to his creatures.

2. By his creatures, they contributing to his glory, by shewing forth his praise, and declaring the glory of his name. So we pray in this petition,

1st. That God would, by his over-ruling providence, hallow his own name, and glorify himself, John 12:28. The sins of men and devils are opposite to the honour of his name; the children of God in this petition put it into his own hands, to cause it shine forth notwithstanding, to dispose all things to his glory. Which may be taken up in three things.

(1.) That he would make the honour of his name to break through all impediments in the way of it, laid by men or devils, Psal. 79:9. 'Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name,' says the church; that he would drive his triumphal chariot over all the opposition made to it in the world, and appear unto men in his majesty and glory.

(2.) That he would make the honour of his name break forth from these impediments themselves, over-ruling the dishonour done to his name, to his honour, so bringing meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong. This he will do, Psal. 76:10. 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee.' And this his people pray for, Psal. 83:17, 18. 'Let them be confounded and troubled for ever, yea, let them be put to shame and perish: that men may know, that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth.'

(3.) That God would remove all these impediments, and shove off all the rubbish which the sins of men and devils have cast upon the

honour of his name, that it may shine forth for ever without let or hinderance. And so it looks as far as the accomplishment of that passage, Rev. 20:14. 'And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.'

2dly, That God would, by his powerful grace, cause the sons of men, ourselves and others, to glorify him and hallow his name: q. d. Let thy name be hallowed by us. This supposes,

(1.) That it is our duty to glorify God, 1 Cor. 10:31.—'Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' It is our main duty, and the chief work we have to do in the world. And whose neglect it, are useless in the world: for their main work is neglected. They answer not the end of their creation.

(2.) That we cannot of ourselves do it, 2 Cor. 3:5.—'We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.' We are weak and powerless, and so unfit for it; we are perverse and selfish, and so unwilling to it. Our strength for it is in God himself.

(3.) That God can fit and dispose us for it, Phil. 4:13.'I can do all things,'says the apostle, 'through Christ which strengthened me.' Grace can make us both able and willing. There is no person in any station whatsoever, but free grace can make of them happy instruments for honouring his name; which should be a powerful motive to induce us to pray fervently for it, otherwise we will never actively glorify him.

Therefore we pray here, that grace may be bestowed on ourselves and others, whereby we and they may glorify him, which Is the leading duty we have to mind in this world and that,

[1.] Internally, by knowing, acknowledging, and highly esteeming him, his names, titles, attributes, ordinances, words, and works, and so every thing whereby he makes himself known, Psal. 77:2, 3. This is to hallow that name in our hearts.

[2.] Externally, in our words and actions, speaking and living to his praise, Phil. 1:11. 'Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

V. Why is this petition put by our Saviour first into our mouths? The reason is, because the glory of God or honour of his name, is the chief end of our being, and of all others. And therefore it should lie nearest our hearts, Rom. 11:36. 'For of him, and through him and to him are all things. To whom be glory for ever.' God's glory is his own end in all his works, and it ought to be ours. We can no other way approve ourselves to him.

I shall conclude with some inferences.

Inf. 1. The dishonour done to God, by one's own sin and the sins of others, must needs go near the heart of a saint, Psal. 51:4. 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned,' says David, 'and done this evil in thy sight.' And again, Psal. 119:136. 'Rivers of waters run down mine eyes; because they kept not thy law.' And to be grieved for our own loss of sins, and not for the dishonour done to God thereby; and to be unconcerned at the dishonour of God in the world by others, does not look like the disposition of a child of the family of heaven.

2. Habitual profaners of that holy name are none of the children of God, whose main care is to get that name hallowed. And how many such profaners of the sacred name of God are to be found in our day! They are so far from making conscience of hallowing that dreadful and fearful name, that they are daily employed in dishonouring it by the most horrid oaths and imprecations, and pouring upon it all the contempt they can, in open violation of the third commandment. How many do profane it by Atheism, Sabbath-breaking, uncleanness, perjury, intemperance, injustice, oppression, lying, stealing, backbiting, and other gross abominations, as if they had sold themselves to commit open hostilities against the King of heaven and run desperately upon the thick bosses of his buckler! They wear the

devil's mark on their foreheads, and openly declare to the world, that they are none of God's children.

3. Holiness is the creature's glory, and its greatest glory, for it is God's glory; and therefore unholiness is its disgrace and dishonour. Ah! unholy sinners, ye have lost your glory; sin has disgraced you, and made you contemptible to God and all his holy family. O seek to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit of Christ, that so you may recover your forfeited glory, and no more lie under disgrace. It is only the saints that are the most excellent in the earth. Seek ye to be like them, by having the image of God drawn on your hearts, and walking holily as God is holy.

4. It is not the language of a child of God to say, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' as wicked Cain did: what is my business how such an one live or die? Why truly, if thou belongest to God, it will be matter of thy hearty concern and prayer, that God may be honoured by others as well as by thyself. Without this concern a man cannot be a Christian; he is not a child of God; for every true believer ardently wishes and prays that God may be glorified; and as far as his power, authority, influence, and example, can reach, he will use his utmost endeavours to induce others to glorify the name of his God. Were it in his power, he would leave no means unessayed to engage the whole world in this delightful work, that 'songs might be heard from the uttermost parts of the earth, even glory to the righteous.'

5. It is the disposition of a child of God, to submit his lot and condition in the world to the Lord, to be cut and carved as may serve his glory. Without this one cannot be a child of God. For it is inseparable from the character of such an one, in whatever state he is, therewith to be content. Hence the apostle Paul could say, 'As always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death,' Phil. 1:20.

6. It is the duty of all men to sanctify the holy name of God, to reverence, adore and honour it, in their hearts, lips, and lives. O! let

us then be excited to the practice of this duty, considering that it is the end for which God gave us a being; that if we do not hallow it, we contradict this very petition, praying for a thing we have no mind to comply with; that if we live in the neglect of this duty, God will get honour to himself by inflicting heavy judgments upon us in this life, and by making us eternal monuments of his vengeance in the next; that when we come to encounter with the king of terrors, it will tend to sweeten the awful prospect, that we have made it our business to glorify the name of God; that we will loose nothing, but be great gainers, by honouring the name of the Lord; for they that do so shall be reckoned among his jewels, and be a royal diadem in the Lord's hand; they shall be happy in death, and be safely conveyed to Immanuel's land where glory dwells. Let us then make it the principal business of our lives to glorify God, that so we may come to enjoy him for ever.

THE SECOND PETITION

MATTH. 6:10.—Thy Kingdom come.

As the first petition relates to the name of God, this second relates to the kingdom of God, the kingdom of our Father which is in heaven; the coming of which, that is the advancement thereof, is desired by all the children of God. And that is the great mean of glorifying his name; for then is his name hallowed, when his kingdom comes, is advanced and carried on till it come to perfection.

In discoursing further from this subject, I shall shew,

I. What is meant by the kingdom of God.

II. What is the import of this petition, for it's coming.

III. The reasons of the concerns of the children of God for the coming of his kingdom.

IV. Apply.

1. I am to shew, what is meant by the kingdom of God. There is a fourfold kingdom of God, mentioned in scripture.

1. The kingdom of his power, which reaches over all the world. The subjects of this kingdom are all creatures whatsoever, Psal. 103:19. 'His kingdom ruleth over all.' It reaches from the highest angel to the meanest worm that creeps on the earth. It is a vast dominion, comprehending earth, seas, and hell, and all that in them is. He made them all, and therefore has dominion over them all: and to him they must all submit themselves willing or unwilling, Rom. 14:11. 'As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' Compare Phil. 2:10, 11.—'At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' In this respect God is universal Monarch, and all the kings and emperors of the world are but his vassals.

2. The kingdom of his gospel, Matth. 21:43. 'The kingdom of God shall be taken from you,' says Christ to the Jews. This is not so large as the former. It is erected within it, but comprehends the whole visible church, in which God has set up the light of the gospel and Christ's name is known, and men profess subjection to him.

(1.) The subjects of it are all members of the visible church, whether godly or ungodly, sincere or hypocrites, (Matth. 13:47), with their children. Even the worst of them are privileged persons, in comparison of those of the world without the church, Psal. 147:19, 20. 'He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them.'

(2.) The King of it is Jesus Christ, Psal. 2:6. 'Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.' He is the alone Head of it, and only supreme in it. And neither Pope nor King can pretend to the supremacy over it, without invading his royal prerogative to their own cost, Eph. 1:22, 23. 'God hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.' And his glory he will not give to another.

(3.) The laws of it are the word of God. The Bible it the book of the laws of the kingdom, which great and small within the kingdom are equally bound to walk by, Isa. 8:20. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' These laws are attended with the most weighty sanction; and as they have the promise of eternal life of free grace to those who obey him, so they have the threatening of eternal wrath to the disobedient, suitable to the majesty of the King, Mark 16:16. 'He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.'

(4.) The ordinances of it are gospel-ordinances, instituted by the King himself, bearing his own signature, Matth. 28:20. 'Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' And for men to pretend to add or alter, as if they were not bound up to the divine institution, is the product of their own blindness, and enmity against Zion's King, a saying in effect, 'We will not have this man to reign over us,' Luke 19:27. 'For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, Isa. 33:22.

Lastly, The officers of it (ordinary) are, pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, Eph. 4:11, 12; ruling elders for government, 1 Tim. 5:17; and deacons for the care of the poor, Acts 6. As for prelates or bishops, archbishops, metropolitans, &c. whatever is to be said of their persons, their offices belong not to the kingdom of Christ, but of Antichrist, as well as priests, cardinals, and popes, there being no institution of them in the book of the manner of Christ's kingdom.

3. The kingdom of his grace, Matth. 6:33. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God,' &c. This is yet narrower than any of the former, and comprehends only the invisible church; for it is not an external, but an internal kingdom, in which grace, saving grace, reigns in the hearts of those who belong to it; for, says Christ to his disciples, 'behold the kingdom of God is within you,' Luke 17:21.

(1.) The subjects of it are believers, true saints, and they only; and they commence subjects of this kingdom in the day of Christ's power on their hearts, their new birth-day, Psal. 110:3. Well may it be called a kingdom, for it is a kingdom of Kings, Rev. 1:6 as all the subject of it are 'made kings unto God' Out of prison (their natural state) they come to reign over their spiritual enemies.

(2.) The King of it is Christ, dwelling in their hearts, Eph. 3:17; sitting in their hearts as on his throne, and all things else made his footstool, Luke 14:26. The gospel comes with power to the elect souls, Psal. 24:8. The everlasting doors are lifted up, and the King makes his triumphant entry, and receives the crown at his entrance, Cant. 3 ult.

(3.) The laws of it are the laws of the Bible, but written over in their hearts, Heb. 8:10. What others have in their book only, they have in their book and heart too; that is, inclinations of soul suited to the word are framed in them, which is a new nature, naturally disposing them to obedience without force. This is the law of their mind, Rom. 7:23.

(4.) The ordinances of it are the same gospel ordinances, but observed in a spiritual manner, in spirit and in truth, John 4:24. Phil. 3:3. For this kingdom consists not in outward observances, but inward graces, Rom. 14:17 whereby the soul is conformed to the image of Christ, and the inner man serves the Lord Christ, as well as the outward man: it is 'not in word, but in power.'

Lastly, The Administrator of it is the Holy Spirit of Christ, John 14:16, 17. He teaches the subjects the laws of the kingdom. So they are taught of God. He enlivens, excites, and strengthens them to obedience. He leads them out to the war against their spiritual enemies, inspires them with courage and resolution in the conflict, and crowns them with victory. He makes use of the word for all this, and brings every thought into obedience, 2 Cor. 10:5.

4. The kingdom of his glory, 1 Cor. 15:50. This is the blessed state of eternal happiness in the other world. This kingdom is now a-gathering, but shall fully come at the second coming of Christ.

(1.) The subjects of it are all the elect, being prepared for it by conversion, regeneration, justification, sanctification, and perseverance. This is the end of the golden chain, Rom. 8:29, 30. (And the elect angels make up a part of this kingdom too). However long any of them lie among the pots, there shall none of them be left there, nor missing in that kingdom. There they shall be in body and soul too. For Christ will summon death to deliver him his own, and then he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and present them spotless.

(2.) The King of it is God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, reigning most gloriously over all the kingdom, without the least degree of rebellion or uneasiness under the government among all the subjects, and without any mixture of enemies or malcontents among them, Luke 20:36. This, then, is the kingdom by way of eminency, where the Lord reigns for ever and ever. The kingdom of his power has many malcontents in it, ready to quarrel with their Maker and his administration. The kingdom of the gospel has many adversaries, without and within men, and is held out of many nations. The kingdom of grace has no access to the hearts of many who hear the gospel; and where it is set up, ill neighbours, corrupt lusts, mar the progress. But in the kingdom of glory there are no such things.

(3.) The laws of it are the eternal laws of righteousness, indelibly engraven on their hearts, without the least blot. There is no Bible needed there; for the rule of conduct is written on the mind, and the writing neither waxes old, nor can be erased.

(4.) The ordinances of it are perpetual praises and hallelujahs, never-ceasing songs to God and the Lamb. There is no temple there, for God and the Lamb are the temple thereof. There is no need of preaching or prayer; for perfect knowledge takes place, and every saint is made perfect and full, so as to seek no more. Faith is swallowed up in vision, and hope in fruition.

Lastly, The administrator of this heavenly kingdom is the Holy Spirit, but without any external means. He trained up the saints while in the world for this royal state, and at once, by his internal agency and invisible operations, disposed, fitted them for, and ever presides over them, in the delightful employments of the kingdom of glory, John 14:16. From what has been said,

USE. 1. Submit yourselves contentedly to the disposals of Providence. If God be King over all, is there any fault in the administration; nay, is not all well done, yea, best done? Let his sovereignty silence us; should it be according to thy mind? His infinite wisdom should satisfy us, who knows better than we do what is best for us, and can over-rule all things for his glory and our good.

2. Submit yourselves to the good sceptre. Are ye subjects of the gospel-kingdom? Then it becomes you to be subject to the laws, to observe the ordinances, and to be submissive to the officers of the kingdom. The contempt poured on these falls on the Prince of the kingdom. Beware then of transgressing or offending in this matter, lest ye incur the guilt of high treason against the majesty of Heaven, and the stone cut out of the mountain without hands fall upon you, and crush you to pieces. Answer the gospel-call, and let it have its due effect upon you, in submitting to the sceptre of Jesus Christ as King of Zion, and resigning yourselves wholly to him, as your

Prophet, Priest, and Sovereign to be taught his will for your salvation, to be redeemed by his blood, sanctified by his Spirit, and to be ruled and governed by his laws as in the hand of the Mediator.

3. Let our royal Master have your hearts for his throne, and set up his kingdom of grace there. Let him sit enthroned there, without any rivals or competitors, and without any squint looks to any other sovereigns that may have had dominion over you, whether the devil, the world, or the flesh. Lie no more to him with your lips, nor offend him with any sinful or corrupt practices. Give him your hearts, and let them be his for ever, to meditate on his word and delight in his laws. There is no getting to the kingdom of glory without this. For all the loyal subjects of this kingdom are absolute nonconformists to the world, and are conformable to Christ their King in righteousness and holiness: and it is their study to be conformed to him more and more; and they are grieved that they are not so perfectly.

Lastly, Labour and be restless till ye get your interest in the kingdom of glory secured. And this is done by closing with Christ for all the ends for which he is given of God. It is dangerous to delay this. Therefore kiss the Son, lest he be angry. Now is the time, now or never.

II. I proceed to shew, what is the import of this petition for the coming of the kingdom of God. Here it is to be observed concerning this fourfold kingdom, that they are sweetly linked together, and stand in a line of subordination, the end of which is the kingdom of glory, the kingdom of grace being subordinated to it, the gospel-kingdom to that of grace, and the kingdom of power to the kingdom of the gospel. Therefore I must begin with the kingdom of glory.

First, What is the import of this petition with reference to the kingdom of glory? It imports,

1. That the kingdom of glory is not come yet, 1 John 3:2. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be.' The King has not yet erected that

kingdom. The King's coronation-day for that kingdom, 2 Thess. 1:10 is not yet come. That is a kingdom of perfect light and uninterrupted day. But the king's glory is yet under a veil in this world, through which only some rays are darted forth. It is night still, and till the day break, and the shadows flee away, the King has betaken himself to the mountains of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense, Cant. 6:6. And many of the designed subjects are yet lying among the pots, some of them yet in the devil's kingdom, some of them in their pilgrimage, some of them are got home indeed, but only half-home, having their souls in heaven, but their bodies in the grave.

2. That it will come. The King really designs it. From eternity he decreed it, John 17:24. 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.' He is gone to heaven, but he will surely come back again, and he will set up this kingdom, Acts 1:11. There are two things one may say with full assurance about it, though it is not come yet.

(1.) It shall certainly come. It is impossible it can fail to be erected. The Father's truth, the Son's blood, and the Spirit's seal, are pledges of its erection. The Father has promised it, the Son purchased it, and the Spirit sealed it on the souls of all the saints. The King shall receive that crown, and the subjects theirs too, however low as some of them sit at this day, Matth. 25:31, 34.

(2.) It shall never come down, but last for ever. Many, sometimes famous, kingdoms in the world are now no more. The Assyrian, Chaldean, Persian, and Roman monarchies, as they came from below out of the sea, so they are all come to ruin. But this kingdom, as it is from above, so it shall never be destroyed, never swallowed up, nor succeeded by another, Dan. 7:27. 'His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.'

3. That it is the duty and disposition of the saints and children of God, to desire the coming of this kingdom, and that themselves and

others may be brought into it, 2 Tim. 4:8. And this their desire comprehends these four things.

(1.) The King's coming to receive his kingdom at the last day, Rev. 22:20. 'He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly.' The Spirit in the hearts of the saints, that cries, 'Abba, Father,' cries also, (as Judg. 5:28.) 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?' They would have swift time that runs like a post, and never halts, to put wings to its feet, to hasten their King's coming.

(2.) The destruction of the last enemy, death, 1 Cor. 15:26. It is the last that will stand in the way of the erection of this kingdom of glory. But the King's summons, by the sound of the last trumpet, put in the hands of the grim tyrant, will give him one conquering stroke, cause the doors of the grave fly open, and loose his grips for ever of the bodies of his saints. And this they long for, and joy in the faith of it, 1 Cor. 15:57.

(3.) The everlasting complete happiness of themselves and others in that kingdom, Psal. 14 ult. Col. 3:2, 3, 4. Every thing desires its own perfection, and therefore grace is natively carried out in desire after glory. If it were at the saint's choice, he would not live always, Job 7:16 and therefore is coming up out of the world in affection or desires, Cant. 8:5.

Lastly, The coming of the kingdom of grace, in order to all this. Which brings me to the second thing. But before I enter on that, I must answer a

Case. If this be the disposition of the saints, I am none: for Christ's coming is a terror to me, and how can I desire it? Ans. (1.) If this temper of spirit rise in thee from an habitual tastelessness and unsavouriness of holy, spiritual, and heavenly things, and from a reigning relish of the things of this present world, no wonder that Christ's coming be a terror to thee, and thou canst not desire it, more

than any thing can desire to be out of its element, as fish to be dragged out of the sea. And while it is so with thee, I can speak no comfort to thee, Phil. 3:18–20. 'For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly; and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.'

(2.) But if holy, spiritual, and heavenly things have the predominant relish habitually in thy heart, and that sin and the world's vanities are unsavoury, in comparison of these; then, though it is often a terror to thee when thou thinkest on it, yet thou dost really desire it, though not expressly, yet interpretatively, ver. 20. And this I prove to thee by two arguments.

1. Dost thou not desire to be perfectly freed from, and set beyond the reach of sin and death? And dost thou not know, that that will never be till that day? Wherefore that desire to be freed from sin and death, has the desire of Christ's coming in the bosom of it, as the desire to have the festered member cut off, for the safety of the life, implies a desire of the surgeon's coming, who is to perform the operation, though it be a terror to the person.

2. Dost thou not desire communion with God, and full and complete communion with him in his glory, in soul and body? Thou knowest that that cannot be till he come, that all sin and sorrow will not be taken away, and this absolutely perfect happiness obtained till then. Wherefore this desire implies, that

Your terror may arise either from natural causes, or want of evidence of interest in Christ, or both together. Wherefore labour to assure your hearts before him by believing, Isa. 35:4.

Secondly, What is the import of this petition with reference to the kingdom of grace? There is no getting into the kingdom of glory but

by coming through that of grace. So that desiring the coming of the former, is desiring the coming of the latter too. It imports,

1. That all men naturally are without this kingdom, under the dominion of Satan, Eph. 2:2, 3. 'In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.' These other lords have dominion over them. And as they are not subjects of, so they have nothing to do with the privileges of the kingdom of grace.

2. That we cannot bring ourselves or others into it, John 6:44. 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.' God alone can do it, Col. 1:13. It is he who translates us into the kingdom of his dear Son. One will lie under the iron yoke for any thing he can do, till the power of grace break it. When one is brought into it himself, he cannot bring his nearest relations along with him. He may use the means, exhort, excite, &c. but can do no more.

3. That we cannot, where it is set up, maintain and advance it, against the enemies of it, 2 Cor. 3:5. 'We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves.'—Satan, the world, and corrupt lusts, are the enemies of this kingdom, fighting against it continually, to extinguish it, and to retard its progress, Gal. 5:17. 'For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. And if there be not another power than our own to balance the opposition, it will give way before them.

4. Lastly, That it is the duty and disposition of the children of God to desire, that the Lord himself may bring forward his kingdom, as Paul said to King Agrippa, 'I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am,' Acts 26:29. This extends to,

(1.) The destruction of the power of sin and Satan over the hearts and lives of men, Psal. 68:1, 18. 'Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men: yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.' Every saint grudges the sway which these enemies bear in the world, and prays it down.

(2.) The conversion of sinners to God, 2 Thess. 3:1. 'Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and he glorified.' Converts are the church's children, for which she travails in birth, in her ministers and members, as naturally longing for the conversion of souls, as a travailing woman to see the fruit of her womb.

(3.) The preserving and advancing to perfection the state of those who are in it already, ourselves or others, 1 Pet. 5:10. 'The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you. It is the joint desire of all who are brought into this kingdom, to be carried on and through, till they come to the kingdom of glory, both themselves and others.

Lastly, In order thereto, the coming of the kingdom of the gospel. This brings me to the

Third thing, What is the import of this petition with reference to the kingdom of the gospel? It is by the kingdom of the gospel that one is brought into the kingdom of grace. So desiring the coming of the one, we desire also the coming of the other. It imports,

1. That there are many impediments in the way of the propagation and efficacy of the gospel, which we cannot remove. The devil is the main agent against it, 1 Thess. 2:18. 'Satan hindered us,' says Paul. Under him, the chief agents are the Turk and Antichrist; and every wicked man that has access to put hand to that work, all the world

over; corrupt lusts in every man's heart, Luke 19:14 and even the untenderness and unwatchfulness of good men.

2. That the Lord himself can remove all the impediments out of the way, and make the gospel triumph over them all, persons or things, sins or troubles, that are laid in the way to hinder it, Isa. 57:14. 'Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people.'

3. That it is the duty and disposition of the children of God to desire the advancement of the kingdom of the gospel. It extends to,

(1.) The removal of the impediments out of its way in the world, 2 Thess. 3:1. It is the desire of the saints, that Satan's power in the world may be broken. And they should all pray for the downfall of the Turk and Antichrist, for the purging of the church of corruptions, scandals, and divisions, and whatsoever hinders the progress of the gospel; and that peace and truth may be maintained.

(2.) The propagation of the gospel through the world, that it may be carried through all nations; that the Jews may be brought in, Rom. 10:1 and the fulness of the Gentiles, Psal. 67 and that Christ may be King in all the earth.

(3.) The efficacy of it, to set up the kingdom of grace in men's hearts, 2 Thess. 3:1 and that all things may be ordered to the advantage of it; the Spirit poured out from on high, the church furnished with gospel officers and ordinances, countenanced and protected by the magistrate, ministers made powerful and lively in their work, and the people tender and orderly in their walk, &c. all these things contributing to the success of the gospel.

Lastly, That God would exert his power for all this; which brings me to the

Fourth thing, What is the import of this petition with reference to the coming of God's kingdom of power? It is by the power of God that all

these great things must be brought about. So the desiring of the coming of the gospel, is the desiring of the coming of this kingdom too. It imports,

1. That these things will not be done unless Omnipotency interpose. The work is great, the hands employed in it are feeble and there is great opposition. It will stick, if heaven put not to a helping hand.

2. That it is the duty and disposition of the children of God, to desire that God would exercise the kingdom of his power in the world, as may best conduce to these ends, Isa. 64:1, 2. 'Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence. As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence.'

USE. Shew yourselves of the family of heaven, by your concern that the Lord's kingdom may come, even that of glory, grace, the gospel, and power. For this is the language of those who cry unto God, 'Abba, Father.' Let this be a petition in every one of your prayers, private or secret. And contribute ye your best endeavours for promoting this glorious end. And let your life and practice shew to the world, that ye have the interests of God's kingdom at heart.

III. I proceed to shew, the reasons of the concern of the children of God for the coming of his kingdom.

1. The new nature in them moves that way, Isa. 43:21. 'This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.' It is from heaven, and aspires to heaven, and is heavenly in its motions, Phil. 3:20. 'Our conversation is in heaven,' Rom. 8:5. 'They that are after the Spirit, do mind the things of the Spirit:' As by our first birth we join and addict ourselves to the interests of hell, Psal. 58:3. 'The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies; so one by the new birth joins interests with heaven. So that the meanest saint has a natural concern for the

kingdom of Christ's thriving, the Spirit put in them being a public Spirit.

2. It is their Father's kingdom. How then can the children not be concerned for it? Matth. 6:9, 10. Their Father's honour must be dear to them, Mal. 1:6. 'If I be a Father, where is mine honour?' The further on his kingdom goes, the more his glory is advanced; and they have the more satisfaction as children, in their father's honour.

3. Their own interest lies in it. They are willing subjects of the kingdom of his power. They are subjects, not only of the kingdom of the gospel, but of the kingdom of grace, and designed subjects of the kingdom of glory. So in its good their own is wrapt up. See Jer. 29:7. Their all is in this ship. No wonder, then, that they be concerned that it come safe to land. When it does, they are made up for ever: if it were possible that it could be cast away, they are ruined.

4. Their brethren's interest lies in it too, Psal. 122:8. All the saints are born brethren. The more the kingdom is advanced, it is the better with them; and the more it is retarded, it is the worse, Psal. 103:16, 17. For be it foul or fair, their lot is in it, and it fares with them as with it. Their brethren yet unborn, all the elect not yet converted, some of them come, some but coming into the world, Cant. 8:8. Should the kingdom of God be taken away what should become of perishing souls? If the net of the gospel be folded up, how should the fish be caught? If the Lord leave our mother, how shall children be brought forth into God?

5. Lastly, The ruin of the enemies' interest lies in it too. Every kingdom has its enemies. There is an irreconcilable war betwixt the devil's kingdom and Christ's. It was proclaimed in paradise, Gen. 3:15. 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.' It never was, nor will be, taken up by a peace; it must end in the ruin of one of the two. As the one goes up, the other goes down; and the perfection of Christ's kingdom will be the

destruction of the other. No wonder, then, that all the King's children cry, Thy kingdom come.

I shall now make some practical improvement of this subject, in uses of information, trial, and exhortation.

USE I. Of information. From what is said, learn,

1. The excellency, usefulness, and necessity of the glorious gospel. It is the kingdom of God.

(1.) It is a most excellent thing, precious in itself, and in the eyes of all saints, 2 Pet. 1:4. It is more excellent than all the kingdoms of the earth; for it is the kingdom of God, Matth. 21:43. It is a field wherein a treasure lies, which, whoso discover, will part with all, if it were crowns and kingdoms, to gain it, Matth. 13:44. And a thousand times happy the man, who can call the field his own.

(2.) It is most useful; for it is the way by which one is brought into the kingdom of grace, and so to glory, Acts 26:18. It is the sword of the Spirit, by which sinners are subdued to Christ, the devil's nest is rifled, his power over sinners broken, and his kingdom brought down. It is the sinner's life, the saint's health, and the instrument of all spiritual good to them.

(3.) It is most necessary, as the kingdom of God among men, without which they are in a miserable plight, the devil ruling among them at his will, Psal. 74:20. 'The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.' It is the key of the kingdom of grace, and opens the door of access to heaven. The world might better want the sun in the firmament, than want the gospel. It is the 'light shining in a dark place.' 2 Pet. 1:19 to guide our feet in the way to eternal happiness.

2. That the cry for the ruin of the kingdom of God, can be no other but the cry of the family of hell. Yet many join in it, saying, 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us,' Psal.

2:3. 'We will not have this man to reign over us,' Luke 19:14. The gospel-kingdom is the great eye-sore to the devil; and if he could reach it, he would destroy it. Sometimes his chain is lengthened, and his forces are raised to raze the temple of God among men. And then multitudes of great and small list themselves in his service, in the unholy war against the church. And then they 'roar in the midst of the congregations; they set up their ensigns for signs:' and 'they break down the carved work thereof at once, with axes and hammers,' Psal. 74:4, 6. But their cry is the cry of hell.

3. That the kingdom of our Lord will triumph over all its enemies, and drive over all opposition. For if what two agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, Matth. 18:19 shall be done for them, much more what all the saints on earth make their joint request. The devil's kingdom, and Antichrist's kingdom, though malignants lend their hand to carry it on, shall fall before the prayers of all the saints, and they in the ruins of it, if they quit not the Antichristian interest. If Christ's kingdom were ever so low, the joint prayers of the saints will raise it up.

4. No wonder that most men's prayers be not heard, for their hearts and lives contradict them quite, Prov. 28:9. 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.' They pray, that God's kingdom may come; yet they will not submit to it themselves. They cannot be bound with the laws of the kingdom of the gospel, they are strangers to that of grace, and the kingdom of glory is not their choice, if they could do otherwise. Christ says to such, 'Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?' Luke 6:46. Remember, Sirs, that 'the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power,' 1 Cor. 4:20. The devil's kindly subjects may pretend a great concern for the kingdom of God. But what of that? It is but a pretence, while the kingdom of God is not within them, but sin reigns in their hearts.

5. Lastly, It is sad work to be employed in hindering the advancement of the kingdom of God, whether men pursue it openly

or covertly. For it is driving contrary to the prayers of all saints. Persecution is a sad piece of work, but the devil is known there by his cloven foot. But scandalous practices, and fiery divisions, in the church, are apt to do more mischief to the kingdom of Christ. For whatever zeal for it the authors of them do pretend, one thing is evident, that the way to the getting good of the gospel is filled full of stumbling-blocks, and the poor blind graceless world is thereby taught to despise the means of grace. It must needs be fearful opposition to the kingdom of Christ, that is thus written in the blood of perishing souls.

USE. II. Of trial. Try by this whether ye be of the family of God or not. Have ye a kindly concern for the coming of his kingdom? Do your hearts say within you, Thy kingdom come? If it be not so, God is not your Father; but if so, he is. How shall that kindly concern be known? If it be of the right sort,

1. It will be a judicious deliberate concern, on a fair view of the nature of the kingdom, Matth. 13:45, 46. Many have a concern for the kingdom of Christ, who indeed know not what it is. The Jews had a mighty zeal for it, upon a mistake: and when it came to them, not answering the notion they had formed of it, they opposed it with all their might. But if ye be concerned for it, on a right view of it from the Lord's word, as a kingdom of true holiness, it is well.

2. A universal concern for it, for the kingdom of power, the gospel, grace, and glory. Ye will be concerned that God would exercise his power, for the advancing of the gospel; that the gospel may have its due effect on yourselves and others; that Christ may away his sceptre in your hearts; and that holiness may be perfected in glory.—You will not only be concerned for the kingdom without you, but for the kingdom within you; not for the kingdom within you only, but without you too.

3. An active concern for it, not in wishing and woulding only, but putting to your hand to get it forward, 1 Cor. 4:20. 'For the kingdom

of God is not in word, but in power; and this ye will do, as ye have access in the world, and particularly in your own hearts and lives. It will set you to keep up a constant war with the enemies, the devil, the world, and your own lusts.

4. Lastly, A superlative concern for it, mastering and swallowing up all other concerns. You will say as the captives in Babylon did, 'If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy,' Psal. 137:6. For if ye belong to God, your chief interest is in that kingdom; and where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

USE. III. and last, Of exhortation. I exhort you to join issue this day with Zion's King, to have common friends and enemies with him, come what will. Set yourselves against the kingdom of sin and Satan in the world and your own hearts; Psal. 2 ult. 'Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.' And do ye exert heart and hand, that his kingdom may come. In this matter ye cannot be neutral: 'For he that is not with me,' says Christ, 'is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad,' Matth. 12:30. Therefore, if ye be not with heart and hand set for the advancement of this kingdom, I declare you enemies to it. Come then,

First, Be concerned that the kingdom of God's power may come; that he may stretch out his almighty arm, and gain ground to himself in the world.

1. It is a universal kingdom. All is in his hand. He can reach to the ends of the earth. It extends over all persons and things; and he can make all things subserve his purposes. He can display his glorious arm in bringing in shoals of volunteers into the kingdom of grace, and utterly root out all the legions of hell that are in combination against him.

2. It is an uncontrollable kingdom. None can resist him more than the clay can resist the potter, Dan. 4:35. '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?' He will work, and who can let it? It is in vain to contend with this almighty Sovereign; for he can easily conquer all his enemies, as easily as he caused the Red Sea swallow up Pharaoh and all his host. He can baffle all the machinations and plots of his adversaries, disconcert their best-laid projects, and make them retreat with shame and confusion. These are great encouragements for this concern.

Secondly, Be concerned that the kingdom of the gospel may come. For motives, consider,

1. That it is not a universal kingdom, but a narrow one, and that it is to be enlarged. For Christ has declared, 'that this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations,' Matth. 24:14. Though now this kingdom be confined within narrow bounds, yet it shall, according to Christ's promise, have a more diffusive spread: and the time will come when the Jews shall be brought in with the fulness of the Gentiles, and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ.

2. It is a moveable kingdom. It may be taken from them that have it. Christ may remove his throne, as he did from the Jews, Matth. 21:43 and as he has done in many once famous churches. Where are now the seven churches in the Lesser Asia? and where are many of those churches that were planted by the apostle of the Gentiles? Alas! their candlestick has been long ago removed out of its place, and the delusions of Mahomet prevail in those places where once the pure doctrines of the gospel were preached. Though Christ will always have a church on earth, yet it is confined to no particular country or place. And therefore, we in this land should earnestly pray, that the kingdom of the gospel may come more illustriously among us, and that it may continue with us to the end of time, that we may still see

many days of the Son of man, and that the candle of gospel-light may ever shine brightly among us. These considerations should influence us always to pray, that Christ's gospel-kingdom may come among us, and be spread through the world.

Thirdly, Be concerned, that the kingdom of grace may come. Consider,

1. It is a kingdom that easily gets a back-set, Cant. 2:15. It may be thriving in a soul this moment, and the next going to decay. There is need of much faith and watchfulness for preserving and maintaining it. A multitude of formidable foes are still opposing it, and all the subjects of it have no power to resist them. They must look to their Captain-General, and be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. It is only through him that they can do valiantly: for it is he alone who treads down their enemies under their feet. And through him they shall be more than conquerors. Trust ye then in the Lord for ever; for with the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. Be sober, then, and watch unto prayer, lest ye fall into temptation. Cry unto your King, for he will save you, and gradually overcome all your enemies.

2. Yet this is a kingdom that can never be overturned, never removed, Heb. 12:8. It is a spark of fire in the midst of an ocean, that can never be quite drowned or extinguished. The braised reed shall not be broken, and the smoking flax shall never be quenched. All the combinations of adversaries, however formidable, shall never overturn this kingdom; for the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. It is built on the Rock Christ, and all the surges and waves of the dragon's flood shall never overturn the edifice. The name of the city is, 'The Lord is there.' Of this kingdom of grace, it may well be said, 'Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us,'

Isa. 8:9, 10. 'These are powerful considerations for inducing you to a hearty concern for the coming of this kingdom of grace.

Fourthly, Be concerned that the kingdom of glory may come. Consider,

1. Sin and trouble will have an end put to them there. The stage of sin and vanity will then be put down for ever, and none of the scenes that have so much vexed the righteous here, will ever be exhibited again. All corruptions, temptations, and backslidings from God, will then come to a final period. All bodily trouble and spiritual distress shall cease, and never more be heard of.

2. Grace and happiness will then arrive at their full perfection. The mystery of God will then be finished. Then will God's kingdom of power, of the gospel, and of grace, fully obtain their end; and all the subjects of Christ shall be completely blessed in the full enjoyment of him for evermore. Let us all then say, Let the kingdom of glory be hastened. Amen.

THE THIRD PETITION

MATTH. 6:10.—Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

THIS third petition relates to the will of God, the doing of which is desired by all the children of God. And as by the coming of his kingdom his name is hallowed, so by doing his will his kingdom comes, or is advanced, and we own him to be King, Heb. 13:21. So all these three petitions meet in one great desirable point, viz. the glory of God. This is the scope of them all.

Observe here, by the by, that we are directed to speak to God in prayer as to one. Hallowed be thy name, not your name: Thy will be done, not your will. Wherefore then, should any forsake such a form of sound words, for such a harsh one, as speaks to God by ye and your, your Majesty, ye know all things, &c.? I will not insist on what may be said to defend it, from the plurality of persons in the Godhead, the manner of speaking to kings, and from common conversation, (those who use it, I suppose, doing it rather from custom than judgment.) But it is not the scripture-way of speaking to God; it is not the way of this pattern of prayer; it is offensive to, and grating in the ears of the most part of Christians, as savouring of the opinion of the plurality of Gods, and therefore ought to be forsaken. I may well say in this case, 'But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God,' 1 Cor. 11:16.

In discoursing from this petition, I shall shew,

I. What is meant by the will of God.

II. By whom is God's will done in heaven.

III. What is the import of this petition.

IV. The reasons why the saints have such a concern, that the will of God may be done in earth as it is in heaven.

V. Apply.

1. I am to shew what is meant by the will of God. By it we are to understand the will of his commands, and the will of his providence.

First, The will of God's commands, Heb. 13:24. 'Make you perfect in every good work to do his will.' Matth. 7:21. 'He that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.' His is the kingdom over all creatures; he sits on the throne of his power, and gives out his will to all the rational world, which they are bound to obey, as the King's law, and laws of his kingdom, determining what they ought to do, and what to

forbear. The church has that will of the King in all points in the Bible. In heaven, all do it; in hell, none do it; in earth, some do it, others not; and those who do it, do it but imperfectly. So we pray, Thy will be done.

The will of God's commands, is exceedingly comprehensive, Psal. 119:96. 'Thy commandment is exceeding broad.' It is but one will of God; but the objects of it, the things willed are many: but as many as they are, sincere Christians do sincerely fulfil them, though not perfectly, Acts 13:22. 'I have found David,—a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will,' Gr. 'all my wills.' This whole will of God, however, may be reduced to two heads, viz. faith, and holiness.

1. Faith, 1 John 3:23. 'This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.' And this is comprehended in that, Matth. 7:21. 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.' Ye are to look on it as the Father's will, the will of God, that ye believe in his Son, 2 Cor. 8:5. 'They gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.' It is the great thing which he wills you to do, John 6:29. 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' His dinner is prepared, he wills you to come to the marriage, Matth. 22:2. This answers all the objections, I may not, I dare not, I will not be welcome. It is God's will that ye come forward. And ye have the prayers of all the saints to help you forward, Thy will be done. And the crossing of this will of God will ensure your ruin, more than any thing else, John 3:18. 'He that believeth not is condemned already.' Mark 16:16. 'He that believeth not shall be damned.'

(1.) Faith is the first leading will of God, 1 John 3:23 forecited. If ye would do any part of the will of God, believe: for ye can do none of it, if ye do not this, Heb. 11:6. 'For without faith it is impossible to please God.' John 15:5. 'Without me ye can do nothing.' If ye do not begin with believing, all that ye do is nothing. As in arithmetic, if a

thousand cyphers be set in a line, they are nothing, but if begun with a figure, they are all something; so believe, and the rest will be the obedience of faith.

(2.) Faith is the last will of God. It is the Lord's last will, that ye believe in Christ, Mark 16:16. 'He that believeth shall be saved.' John 3:16. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' The Lord's will to man at first was, 'Do this and live.' Now he cannot do that: but that he may not perish, his will now in the second covenant is, 'Believe, and ye shall be saved.' The first not being complied with, the second came for man's help: but this second is the last. If ye do not believe, there is no third to be looked for, but fiery indignation, Heb. 10:26, 27.

2. Holiness, 1 Thess. 4:3. 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification.' God is a holy God, and cannot will unholiness. It is Satan's will and your own corrupt will, that ye be unholy. But therein ye contradict the will of God, Rom. 8:7. 'Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Every unholy thought, word, or action, is a going cross to the will of God, and therefore sinners are said to 'vex his holy spirit,' Isa. 63:10 as men are vexed when their will is still contradicted and crossed. Holiness is,

(1.) The will of God's nature, 1 Pet. 1:16. 'Be ye holy, as I am holy.' God has willed man to be holy; and it was inconsistent with his nature to have willed them to be unholy. Faith in a crucified Redeemer is God's will of free choice. He did not will innocent Adam to believe in a Mediator. He might, if he had pleased, never have provided that object of faith, and so there might never have been such a thing as faith in a Redeemer. But having once made man, he could not but will him to be a holy man. And fire and water may sooner agree than God's will and unholiness.

(2.) The will of his whole law. It is all pure, Psal. 19:8. A vein of holiness runs through the whole of it, and through every part. All the ten commandments are so many laws of holiness; all the enlargements on them in the Bible are so many directions and instructions for holiness of heart and life. There the Lord has parcelled out his will in so many particulars, but holiness is the scope of them all.

(3.) The will of God to all men, yea, all the rational creatures. That reason, 'Be ye holy, as I am holy,' 1 Pet. 1:16 reaches all. The devils will not be condemned because they do not believe in Christ; they have no warrant to believe in him, the gospel-offer is not made to them, Heb. 2:16. Prov. 8:4 but because they are unholy. The pagans will not be condemned neither for their unbelief, Rom. 2:12 for the gospel is not revealed to them, but because they are unholy, Rom. 1:8. 'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.'

Secondly, The will of God's providence, Psal. 135:6. 'Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.' He sits in heaven universal monarch of the world, and has the disposal of all his creatures, and all that concern them in his hand, and is accountable to none for his disposals, Dan. 4:35 forecited. They are all his own, as being created by him, and for him; and so he may do with them as the potter with his own clay, Matth. 20:15. Now this will of God's providence may be considered two ways.

1. As directing to duty, Psal. 32:8. 'I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go.' God speaks by his works as well as by his word. The whole world have this sort of speech made from heaven to them, Psal. 19:1–3. 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech, nor language, where their voice is not heard.' Providence serves to point men to particular pieces of service, Gal. 6:10. 'As we have

therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.' And therefore we must not be idle spectators of Providence, Psal. 107 ult. 'Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.' But we must observe the language and meaning thereof, proving what is the good and acceptable will of God to us in it.

2. As ordering and disposing of events about ourselves and others, Matth. 10:29, 30. 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.' The world is a great family, under the conduct and management of an infinitely wise Master. And, for as broad and wide as it lies, his eye is in every part of it, and his hand too. And there is no person or thing but is under his providence; and whatever befalls them is their portion or lot appointed by the great Master.

This all-disposing will of Providence reaches particulars, with respect to men, to us innumerable, even all that concerns them. But they may be reduced to two heads.

(1.) Smiling providences, in favourable dispensations, Rom. 2:4. The unthankful world is filled with these, for he doth good even to the unthankful and the unholy. Every day his table is spread, and he loads men with his benefits; though the mess of some may be double to that of others, yet all feed at his cost.

(2.) Frowning providences, Micah 6:9. 'The Lord's voice crieth unto the city.—Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it;' and this in afflicting dispensations. It is the same God who draws the white lines in one's lot, that draws the black ones too. It is the same hand that puts on the crown of prosperity, that pulls it off again. The same God who gives the fair weather, also sends the foul, and after the blink the shower, and the clouds after the rain. If it go ill with a land, with a congregation, or with one's house, it is the will of the Lord that it should be so.

And to all we are to say, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

II. I proceed to shew, by whom is God's will done in heaven.

1. By the bodies of heaven, the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, and stars. God their Creator, when he made them, appointed their ends, motions, and courses; and these they have steadily observed from the time of their creation, Ps. 119:89, 91. 'For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.' The scoffers observe this, 2 Pet. 3:4. 'All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation', though they make a very bad use of it. Though in the heavenly fabric, these bodies are hugely great, and there are so many of them that men cannot number them, yet have they all, from the beginning to this day, observed and kept their motions and courses, without any breach of order, or any deviation whatsoever. In the mean time it is notorious, that engines made by men, and consisting of many wheels, with a variety of motions, are very hard to be long kept right, without going out of their course. But these do the will of God steadily, evenly, and unweariedly, Psal. 19:5, 6. 'The sun is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.' The sun and moon's standing still in Joshua's time, was no faltering nor disorder in their course, but it was in obedience to a particular will of God. And thus they give us a fair copy of doing the will of God on earth.

2. By the angels of heaven. These glorious spirits, attendants of the great King, are obedient to the nod of their Maker, and fall in with every the least intimation of his will, Psal. 103:21. They 'do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.' Though they 'excel in strength,' they entertain not the least thought of disputing his orders, ver. 20. They never put in an exception against the meanest piece of service that God puts into their hands, but are well content to minister unto worm man, Heb. 1 ult. 'Are they not all

ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?' They never use any shifts or offputs in the doing of his will; but when he speaks the word, it is done by them; the orders are readily and cheerfully complied with. Thus they also give us a fair copy of doing the will of God, a copy of rational obedience. The saints in heaven do his will also after the same manner, Rev. 7:5 having got a full answer of this petition as to themselves.

III. I shall now shew, what is the import of this petition, both with respect to the will of God's command, and his will of providence.

FIRST, I am to shew, the import of this petition with reference to the will of God's command. It imports something confessed, professed, and desired.

First, Something confessed. The children of God coming to him with this petition, confess, that,

1. The will of God is not done on earth as it is in heaven. There is no question but that all men on earth are obliged to do it with the same perfection as those in heaven do it, Matth. 5 ult. 'Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' But, alas! it is not done. God has given men on earth his commands, and notified his will to them; but it is not complied with. Though the higher world abides to this day in obedience to its Maker, yet the frame of the lower rational world is quite marred and unhinged. Though above there is a perfect calm, yet below a most unnatural rebellion is raised and continued, so that it is a region of disorder and confusion.

1st, Most men make their own will, and not God's, their law, and the rule of their actions, Rom. 8:7: 'The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' All unregenerate men have shaken off the yoke of subjection to God, and instead of serving God, 'serve divers lusts and pleasures,' Tit. 3:3. If at any time they fall in with what is materially the will of God they do it, not because it is God's will, but because it is their own, and serves

their own ends, as the Pharisees did in their almsgiving and prayers, &c. Matth. 6:1.

2dly, The best men carry the yoke of subjection to the will of God very unevenly, Gal. 5:17. Though they are sincere, they are far from being perfect in doing the will of God. Their own will carries them aside in many things: though they sincerely design the shore for Immanuel's land, and keep not a straight course. The wind of temptations, and their own unruly passions, oft-times blow them aside, so that they are in danger of splitting on the rocks.

2. There is in all men naturally an utter indisposition and unfitness for the will of God's command. There was a sweet harmony betwixt the will of God and the powers of man's soul at first, Eccl. 7:29 but that is gone. Sin has broken the concord, and marred the harmony; so that there is a sad jarring betwixt the two now. They are indisposed,

1st, For knowing it, for discerning what the will of God is, 1 Cor. 2:14. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned.' Sin hath raised a mist, so that the travellers cannot know the way, but are apt to chuse bypaths of destruction, instead of the King's high-way; to call evil good, and good evil: to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.

2dly, For doing it, Psal. 14:3. 'There is none that doeth good, no not one'. They are imperfect in that work, at best, they have lost the holy art of going by that rule. They have no skill of steering their course to the shore of Immanuel's land. Man naturally is under a threefold indisposition to it.

(1.) An inability to know or do the will of God. He has no head for it, 1 Cor. 2:14 just above quoted. Like Samson, we have lost our two eyes in that point. The gospel is a doctrine of mysteries, that requires a saving illumination to understand it, Eph. 1:17. Even the law itself in

its spirituality is not discerned without a new light from the Lord, Rom. 7:9. And we have no hands for it neither, John 15:5. 2 Cor. 3:5. It is above our natural reach.

(2.) An unwillingness to know or do it. As we have neither head nor hand for it, so we have no heart for it neither, till a day of power change our hearts, Psal. 110:3. And hence it is that the truths of God which are practical are neglected, as not desired, Job 21:14. And when they force their entry into the head, they are held prisoners there, that they may not exert their efficacy in the heart, Rom. 1:18. And much more unwilling are we to doubt it, Hos. 4:16. 'Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer.

(3.) A bias in the will to the wrong side, a bent and propensity to follow our own will, and the lusts of our own heart, Psal. 14:1. 'There is no God,' is the languish of every man's heart by nature. They would set up themselves for their own rule and their own end, and contend with their Maker for the sovereignty, that it should be according to their will with them, and not according to his. Again, it imports,

Secondly, Something professed. The children of God, coming to their Father with this profession, profess, that,

1. It is the grief of their hearts, that God's will is not done by themselves or others, as it is done in heaven, Matth. 21:29. Psal. 119:136. A gracious person has the law written in his heart. He knows it, and esteems it to be righteous in all things, the doing of it to be both one's duty and interest, Psal. 119:128. The heart inclines to the doing of it, though corruption and temptation drive him by it, Gal. 5:17. Hence proceeds sorrow of heart, that it is not done.

2. That God by the power of his grace, is able to reform this, and to frame the souls of men on earth to the doing his will, as in heaven, Prov. 21:1. He can new-frame men's will, give it a new bent of conformity to his own, and fix it too therein, Ezek. 36:26. So they pnt

their own and other's hearts in God's hand, that he may set them in a way of obedience, Psal. 119:36. It imports also,

Thirdly, Something desired. And there are two things here desired of God by all the saints.

1. That he would by his grace remove from themselves and others all spiritual blindness and cause them to know his will, Eph. 1:17, 18. There can be no doing of God's will, without first knowing what it is, Rom. 14 ult. For suppose one to do what God requires, who yet does not know that he requires it, it is plain that one in such a case does it, not because it is the will of God, but because it is his own will. There is a natural blindness in all, and the remains of it are in the regenerate. This hides the will of God from them in many particulars, and so hinders them from doing it. But the children of God desire to know it in all things.

This desire to know the will of God is a mark of sincerity, if it be attended with these two properties.

(1.) If it be universal, if the soul really desires to know the whole will of God, Rom. 7:22; not only some shreds of the law, but the whole law, Psal. 119:6. Hypocrites may desire to know some parts of God's will, which are most agreeable to their own ends and inclinations. But happy they whose souls are opened to receive the intimations of the divine will in all things.

(2.) If it be practical, if they desire to know his whole will that they may conform themselves to it, Psal. 103:18. There may be a desire of the knowledge of God's will for speculation, to know it for the sake of knowledge, which may be found in the ungodly. But to desire the knowledge of it for the sake of practice, is a mark of sincerity.

Such a desire is a Sure mark: because,

[1.] It evidences a heart reconciled to the whole will of God, Heb. 8:10. The unrenewed heart is never so reconciled, Rom. 8:7. And

therefore, since they have no inclination to let in the whole law into their heart, they do what they can to keep it out of their heads, and are willingly ignorant of what they are unwilling to practice, Job 21:14.

[2.] It evidences a heart ready to part with every known sin, with any thing whatsoever, upon the discovery of its contrariety to the will of God, Psal. 19:12. It is an evidence of an honest heart to be content to be searched, Psal. 139:23; but those who harbour deceit, will be unwilling to let in the discovering light, Jer. 9:6.

2. That God by his grace would remove from themselves and others, all weakness, indisposition, and perverseness, and cause them to obey and do his will, as it is done in heaven, Psal. 119:35. So this desire extends to,

(1.) The removal of the impediments of dutiful obedience to the will of God. The children of God are sensible of the obligation lying on all to conform to the will of God in all things; but withal, that there is in them,

[1.] A weakness, obstructing their obedience, which they would fain have removed, Eph. 3:16. The weak knees, the feeble hands, fail them when they would ever so fain do his will. These are their burden, and these they lay before the Lord daily for strengthening, longing for the day when the executive power shall be answerable to their will, and their will to the will of God.

[2.] An indisposition, hindering their obedience, which they would fain be rid of, Matth. 26:41. The gracious heart itself has such a mixture of corruption, that there is always a spice of backwardness to compliance with the will of God, and an inclination to the wrong side which they have to strive with. This is as iron fetters on them, out of which they would be enlarged, to run the way of God's commandments.

[3.] A perverseness of spirit, whereby one is inclined to resist and go quite contrary to the will of God. Ephraim complains of this, Jer. 31:18. 'I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God.' And the remainders of it in the best occasion them many a sad struggle; by-which the heart of a child of God is like a field of battle; the new nature endeavouring to take on the yoke, the corrupt nature resisting, and shifting, like an untamed ox.

(2.) God's advancing them to, and fixing them in a course of dutiful obedience to his own will, that they may do it as it is done in heaven. They look on perfect holiness as what would be their happiness. They see the will of God how it is done in heaven; they approve and love that way of it, and condemn their own, and would fain be brought up to the way of heavenly obedience, being wearied of their own earthly heartless way of doing it.

Quest. What signifies their praying for it, since they cannot obtain it while here? Ans. It speaks,

1. Their sense of duty in that case, and of their failings in their best performances. It is certain that perfection as well as sincerity of obedience is our duty, though we cannot reach it, Matth. 5 ult. 'Be ye perfect, &c. And when the saints have stretched out to the utmost, they sit down sighing, that they cannot get the length they should, Luke 17:16.

2. Their desire of perfection, which is accepted of God, 2 Cor. 8:12. They would do the will of God on earth as it is in heaven, if they could. That is the bent and disposition of their new nature, and they would as fain be rid of the remainders of corruption, as ever a prisoner was desirous of being rid of his chains, Rom. 7:24 while others please themselves therewith as with golden chains.

3. Their sincere endeavour to go forward to that perfection. Though, the stormy wind blowing in the face of the weak creature, they cannot hold pace with those in heaven in doing the will of God; yet they are still following them at a distance, if at length they may get up with them, Phil. 3:13, 14. And here as in a glass, we may see what sort of doing the will of God the saints aim at, and desire. It is,

(1.) To do it evenly, without stumbling or changing their course. So the heavenly bodies and the angels are uniform in their course, Psal. 119:91. But, alas! what an unevenness is there in the walk of the best! Sometimes they are warm in obedience, and again key-cold. Sometimes they are tender with respect to the least of sins, and sometimes untender in great matters, according as grace or corruption gets the mastery. But all the saints are ashamed of this, and groan under the burden of it, longing for the day wherein they shall keep a stayed even course of obedience, as it is in heaven.

(2.) To do it unweariedly. Thus it is done in heaven, Psal. 19:5. 'The sun is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race,' Rev. 7:15. 'They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.' There is no wearying of this doing the will of God in heaven. But, alas! how soon are we on earth weary of well-doing? Even when the spirit is willing, the clog of earth which the soul is fixed to often sets up, and can go no farther. This often makes them long to be dissolved, that without weariness they may be capable to serve the Lord day and night in his temple.

(3.) To do it universally. So the angels do it, knowing all, and doing all in perfection, without the least failure, Psal. 103:21. But which of the commandments do we not break on earth? what part of God's will is done by us in every point as is required? None at all. But the saints hope and long for the day, when they shall be able to know and do the whole of it in every point.

(4.) To do it humbly. When the angels have wings to fly on God's errands, yet they have also wings to cover their face and their feet, Isa. 6:2. There is no raising of pride in their hearts upon the doing of their duty, nor to keep them from any duty. But how does pride of heart keep us back from many duties as too low for us! and how often does it arise upon the doing any thing well; 2 Cor. 12:7. This is a heavy piece of the body of death, which the saints long to be rid of.

(5.) To do it cheerfully, Psal. 103:20. So the angels do in heaven. It is no burden to them to do his will; there is no heavy driving in the course of their obedience. This also is our duty, Psal. 100:2. But, ah! how often are our hearts to be dragged to duty! what backwardness to the doing of God's will, like the cutting off of a right hand! How desirable is it to a holy heart to be able to obey cheerfully!

(6.) To do it readily, without delay. So the angels are represented with wings, to shew their readiness and speed in obeying their Lord. So should we, Psal. 119:60. 'I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.' But, alas! how far from it are the best many times! God speaks once, yea, twice, but we perceive it not. How often are we ruined with delays, and our work is marred in our hand! It is the desire of all the godly to be rid of this indisposition.

(7.) Lastly, To do it constantly. So the heavenly bodies do it without intermission, without interruption: and so do the angels. So the saints desire to do, Psal. 119:112. 'I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end.' But, alas! how fickle and inconstant are they now, through a lightness of heart, which is heavy, heavy to every gracious soul!

SECONDLY, I shall shew, what is the import of this petition with reference to the will of God's providence. It imports,

First, A confession, (1.) Of a natural aptness in all men to quarrel, repine, and murmur against the methods and disposals of Providence, Numb. 14:2. No king's management is so freely

canvassed and censured by the subjects, as the King of heaven's management in this world is by the hearts of men. An all-wise Providence guides the world, in every particular; but where is the man that has not some quarrel or other with it?

[1.] Kind providences towards others are grudged, Mat. 20:15. Though God is a Sovereign Lord of all, and all things are his own, and he is debtor to none, men are prone to quarrel the disposal of his benefits, as if they would teach him on whom to bestow his favours.

[2.] Afflictive providences towards one's self are quarreled. The foolish heart speaks as one of the foolish women, Job 2:10 though the most we meet with in the world is short of our deservings, yet how does the heart rise against the smallest evils laid upon as! When the yoke of affliction is wreathed about one's neck, the unsubdued heart rages under it like a wild bull in a net.

(2.) Of a natural backwardness to fall in with the designs of providence of one sort or other. God teaches by kind providences, and afflictive ones too. But such is the perverseness of human nature, that it scorns to be led by the one, Rom. 2:4 or to be driven with the other, Jer. 5:3. Whether God write men's duty in white or black lines of providence, the heart is disposed not to fall in with it, Matth. 11:16, 17.

Secondly, A profession, (1.) Of the saints' sorrow for this disposition of heart crossing the will of God. It is a burden to them, and the renewed nature hereby enters a dissent against this quarrelling of the corrupt nature against the will of God, Jer. 31:18. They condemn themselves for not submitting cheerfully to, and falling in readily with the divine will in all things. It is one of the greatest struggles which a child of God has, to get his will conformed to the will of God.

(2.) Of the faith of. the power of grace to subdue the will to this conformity. So they hereby put their stony refractory heart into the heart-changing hand to melt it down, and make it pliable, Jer. 31:18

forecited. And it is the comfort of all the saints, that there is a remedy of sufficient grace in Jesus Christ, for the removing of the natural perverseness of their wills.

Thirdly, A desire of grace for a thorough compliance with the will of God's providence. Which extends to,

1. A submission to the will of God in afflicting providences. This is our duty, whatever be our trial, Psal. 39:9. 'I was dumb,' says David, 'I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.' But it was a difficult duty, because of that corrupt self-love which cries for ease, and so much prevails in all men; because of that blindness of men's minds, whereby they take that which is really for their good to be for evil to them, and because we are all so much wedded to our own will. Therefore the saints desire the removal of these impediments by God's grace, and the subduing of our hearts to a submission.

2. A thankful acceptance of merciful and kind providences, Luke 1:38. This is our duty also; but it is the natural bias of our hearts to sacrifice to our own net, and to forget and overlook God's goodness in these; to sit down to the covered table of kind providence, not looking up with due acknowledgments to him who has provided it. So it is the saints'desire to have grace to enable them to receive thankfully.

3. A compliance with the design of providences of all sorts. We must act according to the will of providence, Acts 13:36 and we have need of grace for it. When God by his providence puts work into our hands, and gives us abilities and occasions to serve him, we are obliged to employ all for his service, else we answer not the design. Mercies and rods have a call. And every one is by providence put into some particular station, with some talents, less or more, for the duties of that station. He does the will of God's providence, that employs his interest, gifts, and abilities in his calling, moving in his own sphere prudently, constantly, and vigorously, as those in heaven do.

Fourthly, A consent to the will of God, a yielding of the heart that it may be done. Our Lord gives us a copy of this resignation to the will of God in his bitter sufferings, Matth. 26:42. 'O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.' And the church in Paul's case wrote after this copy, Acts 21:14 saying, 'The will of the Lord be done.' And whatever befalls the church, ourselves, or others, by the will of providence, there ought to be a humble resignation to the will of God in it all.

IV. I shall give the reasons why the saints have such a concern that the will of God may be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

1. Because it is most just, holy, reasonable, and equitable, in all things, and they see it so, Psal. 119:128. 'I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right.' Psal. 145:17. 'The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.' God is holy and just in his own nature, and can command, demand, or inflict nothing that is unjust. He can do no wrong to the creature, nor can he bid the creature do any thing wrong. He is infinitely wise, and knows how to guide the world best. What wonder, then, they be concerned his will be done, since it is the best that can be done?

2. Because the glory of God, which of all things is dearest to the saints, is deeply interested in this matter, God is perfectly glorified in heaven, because there his will is done perfectly: but he is dishonoured on earth, because his will is not obeyed and submitted to there. It is by this that his Spirit is vexed, his will being crossed and contradicted by vile worms.

3. Because this would make a heaven on earth. If there were such a harmony betwixt earth and heaven, that God's will were done in the one, as in the other, it would make on earth,

(1.) A heaven for beauty and order of all things. There is a comely order in heaven, because all there keep their own place, and follow the will of the Creator in all things. But sin has filled the earth with

confusion and disorder, which will never be rectified till those on earth return to move according to rule, viz. the will of the creature. What would become of us, if the sun and moon were as irregular in their motions as we are?

(2.) A heaven for happiness. The happiness of men lies in their assimilation to God; and they are so far like him as they conform to his will. Were our will perfectly conformed to the will of God, we could never be miserable; for if God's will were our will, nothing could befall us against our will; we would be pleased with all that we meet with.

USE. Are we directed thus to pray? Then,

1. We ought to be very careful to know what is the will of God in the several passages of our life, Eph. 5:10. Lest we mistake his will, or overlook it, we should study his word, that we may do it: and study his works, that we may comply with the call of them. For we can never be doers of the will of God, if we know it not. It is impossible that an ignorant person can do the will of God; and therefore it behoves us, if we would do his will, carefully to search the scriptures, and narrowly consider the works of God.

2. Let us be careful to do the will of God's commands, in such sort as we may most nearly resemble those in heaven, doing it evenly, unweariedly, universally, humbly, cheerfully, readily, and constantly, as you heard the saints desire to do. And let us never forget to comply with this great commandment, of believing in the name of Jesus Christ; for if this be not done in the first place, we cannot possibly do the will of God in any other thing. Faith is the foundation of all acceptable obedience to the will of God, leads to it, and animates the soul therein. For motives, consider,

Mot. (1.) We are under the greatest obligations to the doing of the will of God. God is our Creator, our Sovereign Lord and Ruler, and therefore has a just title to our obedience. The Creator's authority,

and the Redeemer's love and grace, so amply displayed in the work of our redemption, loudly call for our obeying the will of God. The law is given us as the matter and rule of our obedience; and we are redeemed by Christ, that we may be holy, and comply with the whole will of God revealed to us.

(2.) It is only the doers of his will that shall get to heaven, Matth. 7:21. There is a reward of grace to be reaped afterwards for it. 'In keeping of the divine commandment,' says the Psalmist, 'there is great reward.' None are fit or qualified for the work and employment of heaven but holy persons, and none can be holy without doing the whole will of God. Obedience to his will is an infallible evidence of holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

(3.) Since his will is manifested to us in his word and works, the neglect of it will lay us open to double stripes, Luke 12:47. Since God has been pleased to write to us the great things of his law, and to reveal his will respecting both matters of faith and practice, we can have no pretence for ignorance, nor room to plead that we know not what is our duty. All pleas of ignorance are as inexcusable as those of neglect, which shall be rejected at the great day, and all neglecters of the will of God punished with everlasting destruction.

3. Lastly, Let us be careful to comply with the will of Divine Providence. And,

(1.) Let us consider what the dispensations of the day towards the church, and towards ourselves do call for, and comply therewith. While the Lord's hand is stretched out, and he threatens to take away his peace from us, [1.] Let us examine ourselves, smiting on our breasts, and saying, What have I done to kindle the fire of the Lord's anger? [2.] Let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and have a deep concern for the preservation of truth and peace; that the Lord may support his own cause, bless the gospel for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of all who have given their names to Christ.

(2.) Let us be submissive under all afflicting providences, laying our hands on our mouths, accepting the punishment of our sins, and justifying God in whatever we meet with.

THE FOURTH PETITION

MATTH. 6:11.—Give us this day our daily bread.

THE former three petitions respect God's glory; and the latter three our own welfare. In the first three we are directed to pray for the advancement of his name, kingdom, and will, and in the last three for our own temporal and spiritual good. The order is divine, and teaches us this

DOCT. 'That it is the duty of all, and the disposition of God's children, to prefer God's honour to all their personal and private interests.' It is preferable,

1. To our own temporal welfare: Thy name be hallowed, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done; and then, Give us this day our daily bread. It speaks the disposition of God's children in three things.

(1.) They desire that God's glory may be advanced, whatever come of their bread or provision for this life. Their life itself is by them put in subordination to God's honour, much more the outward comforts of it, Acts 21:13. If the chariot of God's honour cannot drive forward, but it must drive over their table, they bid it welcome to drive on, though it cast down their table, making its way over it, Luke 14:26.

(2.) They desire not bread in a way inconsistent with the glory of God's name, the coming of his kingdom, and doing his will, Heb. 11:25. If they cannot have it, but out of the ruins of these, they will rather want it: it is too dear bought at the expence of the profanation

of his name, wronging and marring the progress of his kingdom, and going over his declared will.

(3.) In pursuing the honour of his name, the advancing of his kingdom, and doing of his will, they will cast themselves on their Father for their bread, in confidence that he will furnish them with what they need of it for those great ends, 1 Cor. 9:7. 'Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?' They have his promise for it, Psal. 37:3. 'Verily thou shalt be fed.' And he will be as good as his word: it is a ruled case, Luke 22:35. 'When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, wanted ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.'

2. To our own spiritual welfare: Thy name &c. Thy kingdom, &c. Thy will, &c. Then, Forgive us our debts, &c. It speaks the disposition of the saints in submitting even their spiritual comforts and ease unto the glory of their Father. An eminent instance of this we have in David, 2 Sam. 15:25, 26. 'And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee: behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.' And we have another eminent instance of it in David's Lord, Psal. 22:1, 2, 3. 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.' To this holy sovereignty Mary was required to stoop, and she did it, John 20:17. 'Jesus Saith unto her, Touch me not: for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.' And why should not all the children of God submit the whole of their spiritual comforts, and the way of their travelling through the wilderness unto their heavenly Father, that he may dispose of it to his own glory, and according to his will? I make no

question, but men are to submit their eternal salvation to the honour of God; but as soon as one is brought into God's family, that is secured, and put beyond a possibility of losing.

The reason of this point is, that God is man's chief end, and the chief good. All things are from him, and so must be for him, Prov. 16:4. Rev 4 ult. And to alter this order, is for men to make God's honour the means, and their own welfare the end; which is to lift up themselves very proudly above God.

USE 1. This speaks death to those who make the interest of God's name, kingdom, and will, lacquey at the foot of their personal private interests; and who cut and carve in their religion, as may be most subservient to advance their own interest, Phil. 2:21. They will drive over God's honour, conscience, justice, and equity, to compass their own ends, and sacrifice all that is sacred to their own worldly interest.

2. It speaks comfort to those who first seek the kingdom of God in the habitual conduct of their lives, Matth. 6:33. These seek in the order prescribed, and so cannot miss to come speed. Heaven is a top with them, and earth under their feet. They consent to the cutting and carving of their own lot, as may be most subservient to God's honour, and God will see well to their welfare.

In the text God is represented as the universal Benefactor, Maintainer, and Supporter of all, out of whose hands every one must receive his portion; and to whom Christ sends rich and poor, to beg their bread of him. And here see,

1. What we are to seek of him, for our bodies, bread, i. e. all the means of life, necessities and conveniences; for a man may be killed with thirst, and starved with cold, though he had abundance of other things, if he want things necessary in these cases.

2. What bread, daily bread, i. e. a competent portion of the good things of this life; God as the great Steward giving to all their portion

meet for them, as a master or steward of a family gives to every member his stated allowance.

3. What sort of daily bread, our own; such as we lawfully come by; for what is unlawfully gotten, and we have no right to by God's gift, Satan puts it into men's hands, not God.

4. When we are to seek it, this day, i. e. every day. God keeps all men hanging on him for every day's provision. In respect of God, those who have the greatest fulness live from hand to mouth; and they are indebted to God for every day's mercies as well as the poor.

5. How we are to seek it, Give us, i. e. by way of free gift. We cannot plead the merit of a crumb; but grounding our plea on mercy through Christ, we may seek all we need.

6. Lastly, For whom we are to seek, us, i. e. for ourselves and others; for we are one needy company, and must be all furnished from the same hand.

Before I proceed to a particular consideration of this petition, I shall observe this point of doctrine from it, viz.

DOCT. 'Men depend wholly and entirely on God's bounty, for all the means and comforts of life.' There are some who are quite broken, have nothing left them, and can do nothing for a livelihood: how do they live? they hang on about their friends' hands, and they have nothing but what they give them. That is the case of all men with respect to God, the best friend of the creatures; and have what ye will, ye know not your own state, if ye know not that ye thus depend on him.

To confirm this point, consider,

1. God is the Creator of all things. He made us and all things, and particularly those which contribute to the support and comfort of our lives, Psal. 100:3. What a precious thing is the life of man, for which

so many hands are set on work to maintain it? They that have a great family to maintain, will have several hands employed in several pieces of work, and all to provide for them. All mankind depend on God; his family of nature is a vast one: and he has made the hands to be employed in it accordingly. He made the corn, and the beasts of the earth, for this end; the earth itself to produce the one, and feed the other; and the heavens, with the glorious bodies therein, to influence the earth for that effect. For this cause the sun, that great servant of the world, is constantly going about, making day and night, seed-time and harvest, &c. and all for the support of the family.

2. He preserves them all in their being, Heb. 1:3. The whole frame of the universe, and all the creatures in it, are upheld by him, as a ball in the air: which would presently fall down, if he should withdraw his supporting hand. The being of the creatures is in a continual flux; there is no necessary connection betwixt their being one moment and another; so that if God should withdraw his hand, they would immediately dwindle into nothing. Our food would all vanish, the beasts disappear, the whole globe of the earth go like ashes in the wind, and the sun go out like a candle burnt to snuff, without his supporting influence.

3. He is the Proprietor of us, and of all the creatures that we have the benefit of, in heaven or earth. He has given you the use of them, but property remains with him: he is the true Owner and Lord of all. Have you got the corn into your barns or barn-yards to feed you, and the wool to clothe you? remember, God says, it is 'my corn and my wool,' Hos. 2:9. Have you the hills plenished with your store? remember God's mark is upon them all, small and great, Psal. 50:10. As it is his earth that bears us, and his air that we breathe, so it is his food that maintains us, and his raiment that clothes us.

4. All things that have life are maintained on his charges, man not excepted, Psal. 145:15, 16. 'The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and

satisfiest the desire of every living thing.' He makes grass to grow for the cattle, and feeds the young ravens that cry. The same heavenly Father whom we seek our daily bread from, feeds the fowls of the air, Matth. 6:26. If God should close his hand upon the creatures that wait on him for their food, where would man's comforts be, that are drawn from them, for the support of his body.

5. All the usefulness and comfort of the creatures to us depends on God, Matth. 19:17. Whatsoever good is in them is dropt into them from the fountain of goodness. The creature is a mere empty nothing in itself, and has no substance without the blessing from the Lord, Matth. 4:4. No creature can be more to another than God makes it to be, Hos. 2:21, 22. The corn cannot hear Jezreel, nor the earth the corn, nor the heavens the earth, unless God hear first; and then the heavens will hear the earth, the earth the corn, and the corn Jezreel.

6. Wherefore God has a negative on all the creatures. Should they all say, Yea, if he says No, nothing can be done, Lam. 3:37. He is the spring that sets all the wheels of the creation a-going. Should he stop, and deny his influence, then all of them are motionless that moment. Thou hast bread; but what will it avail thee without his blessing? if he withdraw it, thou mayst eat, and not be satisfied, Hos. 4:10. Thy clothes could not warm thee without it. Ye might plough and sow, and get nothing for your pains, if he but lay his charge on the earth to deny her fruits. Ye might tend your cattle and flocks and do your best for them, and all to no purpose, if he keep back his own, Psal. 95:4 which ye cannot crave as a debt. Ye might rise early and sit up late, and ply your business with the utmost diligence; but when thou hast done all thou canst do by art or industry, remember what Moses says to the Israelites, Deut. 8:17, 18. 'Thou sayest in thine heart, My power, and the might of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.' And consider what the Lord says, Psal. 127:1, 2. 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is

vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.'

7. Lastly, Our comforts and supports of life are never out of God's reach. If they were ever in such a flourishing condition, he can blast them to us in a moment. One day saw Job exceeding rich and poor to a proverb, Job 1:13, &c. having seven thousand sheep in the morning, and not a living one among all at night. How often has it been, that a fair braird has brought little into the barnyard? When it has been ready for the hook, or cut down in the field, shaking winds and rotting rains have made it little worth, Hos. 2:9. When it is brought to the barn-floor, even then we are not sure of it, Hos. 9:2. 'The floor and the wine-press shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her.' When the corn is made in bread, 'the Lord can take away the whole stay of bread, Isa. 3:1. When it goes down the throat he can make it choke us, and when it is in the belly, he can 'turn it' and make it 'the gall of asps within us' Job 20:14.

I proceed to the petition itself, in which we pray, 'That of God's free gift, we may obtain a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them.'

In discoursing from this petition, I shall shew,

I. What is meant by bread in it.

II. What is the import of this petition for bread.

III. Apply.

I. I am to shew, what is meant by bread in this petition. Not the spiritual bread, which is Jesus Christ; that we pray for in the second petition. Not the sacramental bread neither; that is prayed for in the fifth petition, being a seal of the pardon of sin. But, as I have already observed, bread for the sustenance of our bodies, bread for our own tables, for nourishing the clay bodies in their present earthly state. So this petition concerns our bodies. Hence,

Observe, That we are allowed to be concerned for our bodies, and their sustenance. The neglect of it is a sin against God, Col. 2 ult. And the care of it is necessary to fit us for serving God in our several stations, as the horse must be seen to by him who would make out his journey. And if we be the Lord's children, our bodies are the Lord's by a peculiar title; they are the members of Christ, and temples of his Spirit. And therefore we owe them a particular honour and regard.

Yet there is but one petition here for the body, while there are two for the soul, 'Forgive us our debts,' &c. 'And lead us not into temptation,' &c. Whence,

Observe, Our main concern should be for our souls; and so it is indeed with the saints. This is that better part of the man, which is worthy of double honour, double care and concern, Matth. 16:26.

1. The body is of the earth, the soul is from heaven. By the body we are allied to the beasts, but by our souls to the angels. The one is the brutal part of the man, the other the angelical part. And as heaven is above the earth, so should the care of our souls be beyond that of our bodies.

2. Our bodies are mortal, but our souls immortal. When one dies, his body goes to sleep in the dust till the resurrection; but his soul goes to God who gave it, to live either in heaven or hell. Shall we not then have a greater concern for the immortal inhabitant, than the clay cottage, the weak tabernacle in which it dwells?

3. Caring chiefly for the soul, we secure the happiness of the body too, in this life, Matth. 6:33. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you;' and also in the life to come, Rom. 8:11. 'But if the Spirit of him, that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.' But caring chiefly for the body, we lose the soul and

body too, Matth. 10:39. 'He that findeth his life shall lose it.' And there is no compensating of this loss.

USE. How far are the most part of men from this duly divided concern! Alas! does not the body get the double portion of desires, cares, and concern; and is not the soul admitted only to the least part? For the quantity it gets more, and for the quality too; we being vigorous and lively in our concerns for the body, and careless and indifferent in those for the soul: which is the very reverse of the frame which grace puts the heart into.

Under the name of bread here is comprehended not only bread strictly so called, but generally the good things of this life for the support of our bodies.

1. Necessaries, without which life cannot be sustained, viz. food and raiment. For, as formerly noticed, a man may be killed with thirst, and starved by cold, though he had plenty of other things, 1 Tim. 6:8. Thus the scripture uses of the word bread, Eccl. 11:1. 'Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.'

2. Conveniences, which one cannot live comfortably without, Prov. 30:8. 'Feed me with food convenient for me.' God does not pen up his people to what is absolutely necessary for keeping in their life, but allows them for conveniency and delight, both as to desire and use. This varies according to the several stations in which men are placed in the world, that being abundance to one which would quite hamper another. And so in this men are allowed to beg of God, such a portion of the good things of this life, as is agreeable to the condition which he has placed them in.

Now, all necessities and conveniences of life are comprehended under bread: (1.) Because bread is, generally speaking, the most common and ordinary, the entertainment of the poor and of the rich, and what by a special providence so ordering it, men are least apt to loath.

II. I proceed to shew what is the import of this petition for bread. That I may the more directly handle this, I shall consider it in the several parts thereof, by shewing the import of the words, Give bread, Give us bread, Give us our bread, and Give us our daily bread.

First, I shall shew what is the import of these words, Give bread. Our Lord teaches all his people to come unto God, and say, Our Father—give us bread. It imports,

1. That we are allowed to lay our temporal concerns and wants before the Lord in prayer, as well as our spiritual concerns, Prov. 3:6. 'In all thy ways acknowledge him.' The praying Christian is a trader with heaven, and he may trade there in small things as well as in great things; nay, he ought to do it. For the covenant comprehends the small things of this life, the bread and the water, Isa. 33:16 discretion in managing his affairs, Psal. 112:5; and the success of his management, Psal. 1:3; as well as the great things of eternal salvation, 1 Tim. 4:1. And much of God may be seen in answers to prayers of that kind. Gen. 33:10.

2. That men depend entirely on heaven for the means and comforts of life. Our country in this world is nourished by the king's country: and if the communication betwixt them were stopt, we would all starve, Hos. 2:21, 22. He is the Creator, Preserver, and Proprietor of all the creatures, and their Provisor. There are some who, having nothing of their own, do live by hanging on about the hands of their friends. And that is the case of all men with respect to God, the great Friend of the creatures.

3. That we need bread. While we are in this world, we will need it. The clay tabernacle in its present state, like an old thatched house is still needing reparation: but in a little time we will need no more. Death puts an end to all these needs; and after the resurrection our bodies will be supported without these things which are now necessary.

4. That it is God who giveth us bread. The necessities and conveniences of life are distributed by his hand, Psal. 145:16. Though you get your bread by your labour, you have it from God; for it is God that gives success to your labours. Though others give it you of their own, it is from God; for it is he that opens their hearts to bestow it on you, Deut. 8:17, 18. Neither your industry nor interest can procure it without him.

Lastly, That our bread is God's free gift of mercy, without any merit of ours, Gen. 32:10. The least rag for our clothing, crumb for our food, breathing in God's air, &c. is what we deserve not at the hand of God, Luke 17:10. In Adam we forfeited our right to God's creatures, Gen. 2:17; and by that sin of breaking the first covenant, and many other rebellions against the sovereign God, we have deserved to be stript of all our comforts: so that all we get is God's free undeserved gift.

Quest. What needs one pray for bread, when he has it already? He that has it in his house, yea, upon his table, has good reason to pray for it; because,

1. Without the efficacy of the divine appointment, it cannot be bread to us, it cannot nourish us, Matth. 4:4. Without that our bread will not strengthen us, more than ashes, if God break the stay and staff of it, Isa. 3:1.

2. Without God's good-will and favour with it, there is a curse in it, Mal. 2:2. And cursed bread makes a sad meal.

Secondly, What is the import of these words, Give us bread? It imports,

1. That we may and ought to look to the Lord, not only for our own provision, but for the provision of our families, 1 Pet. 5:7. He that has laid it on masters of families to provide for their families, will make them welcome to pray for their provision. They who have had nothing to provide them with, have got them provided this way: and

those who have had enough for them, little or nothing of it has come to their hand, when God has seen it meet to make it so.

2. That we should be concerned for others also, that they may have bread as well as we. Good men are merciful men, and will give to others that need, and much more wish them well, Jam. 2:15, 16. We are all of one common nature, which requires this sympathy; and it well becomes those who are full to remember those who are hungry.

Thirdly, What is the import of these words, Give us our bread? There are three things imported in it, as desired by us.

1. That whatever portion of the good things of this life be bestowed on us, we may have a right to them, and so may look on them as our own bread.

(1.) A covenant-right to them, through Jesus Christ, by whom the lost right to the creatures is restored to believers, 1 Cor. 3:22. For if one be in Christ, he enjoys his bread by a new tenor, the tenor of the covenant, Isa. 33:16. And that makes dry bread sweet.

(2.) A civil right to them, that it be such bread as we come lawfully by; that it be our own, not another's coming to us in an unjust way, 2 Thess. 3:12. One had better want, than be sustained on the gain of injustice; for upon that one can never expect God's blessing.

(3.) That God would bless our lawful endeavours for bread. That is a promise of the covenant; and what God has promised we may pray for, Psal. 128:2. 'Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands.' One must not think to get his bread by praying for it, with folded hands, Prov. 10:4. 'He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand'. Nor is working for it without prayer to God, the way to obtain it, Hag. 1:6, 9. But God's blessing and man's industry must go hand in hand towards it.

3. That our bread thus brought to our hands may be blessed of God to us, 1 Tim. 4:5. As an ingenuous child loves rather to take his bread

out of his father's hand, than to take it to himself; so the bread which is ours, as aforesaid, the children of God do by prayer put again into God's hand, that they may receive it out of his hand again with his blessing. Lord, do thou give us our bread.

Fourthly, What is the import of praying for daily bread? It imports,

1. That we are to confine our desires of the good things of this life to a competency, and not extend them to wealth and riches, Prov. 30:8. 'Give me neither poverty, nor riches'. We are to pray for daily, not weekly and yearly bread. Riches are a snare to our corrupt hearts, Matth. 19:23 and they who are anxious for them, court their own harm, 1 Tim. 6:9. If God lay them to your hand, as he has done to some of his own, ye are to be thankful for them; but beware the heart go not out after them, but use them for the honour and service of God.

2. That we are to be content to live from hand to mouth, having daily bread, without anxiety for the time to come, Matth. 6:34. Surely we have enough, if God provide for every day as it comes.

Fifthly, What is the import of praying, Give us this day our daily bread? It is not, Give us to-morrow our daily bread. It teaches us,

1. That we are not to be anxious about to-morrow's provision, Matth. 6:34.

2. That God will have us every day coming to him for the supply of our needs. He likes to have his people about his hand; and therefore never furnishes them so one day, but they need to come again another day.

3. That we are not sure of to-morrow. Every day may be our last. 'For what is our life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away,' Jam. 4:14. We may die this day, and need no more. So that there is no occasion for praying for any more than provision suitable to the day when it comes.

I shall conclude this subject with a few inferences.

Inf. 1. Let us be thankful to God for what we enjoy of the good things of this life. We owe it all to him; and therefore let us take all we have as out of his hand, whatever we do for it: for it is at his charges we live. Let us then be thankful to God, and own ourselves debtors to him, for all our mercies; for he it is that giveth rain and fruitful seasons. That there is food for man and beast among us is the effect of his free bounty. And it is owing to the same cause that we have peace to enjoy the fruit of our labours, and that God has not put it into the hands of enemies to eat it up. Let us admire his bounty to a sinful generation; and see and notice with wonder, how he does good to the unthankful and unholy, and how strictly he observes his promises, Gen. 8 ult. 'While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.' That year the general deluge happened, there was no seed-time, nor harvest; but since they have never failed.

2. Let us look to God, and depend by faith on him for future mercies; and particularly look to him, for his blessing on the winter and spring season, on which so much depends with us. Whatever strait he may be pleased to bring, let us accept it humbly off his hand, since he owes us nothing, and may do with his own what he will. Look to him for removing of it, and patiently wait his time. Pray for his blessing on your substance, and on the work of your hands. You see the petition is put in your mouths for it every day. And therefore being offered through Christ, it will be accepted.

3. Let us be content with the measure he sees meet for us. Though others may have more than we, we have more than we can crave as debt? and it becomes us not to pretend to teach the ruler of the world, to whom he should give more, and to whom less, Matth. 20:15.

5. Let us make God our friend through the mediation of his Son, Acts 12:20. Repent, and turn from your sins; and reform yourselves and

families. Sin is the only make-bate betwixt God and us: put that away, since ye depend entirely on him for all you have. It is a strange thing to be provoking him, and grieving his Spirit, by a course of sin, on whom we depend for all things.

5. Beware of abusing God's creatures to gluttony, drunkenness, sensuality, and luxury. Be not like the horse that kicks against him that feeds him: and fight not against the Lord with the benefits he puts into your hands. Many to whom the Lord has given plenty of worldly good things, look on themselves as entitled to a greater liberty than others: but know that the more ye have, ye are the more in God's debt; and as your receipts are more than others, your reckoning will be deeper.

6. Let us serve God joyfully with what he gives us. Let not men take God's gifts, and bestow them on their lusts, as those who use their worldly good things to the dishonour of the name of God, and the feeding of their pride, sensuality, and other brutal passions. Sobriety becomes us; and as our Lord has stinted us to ask no more than a day's provision, let us use what he gives for every day soberly, with thankfulness; and improve it to his honour, in doing his will.

7. Let us not be anxious about provision for this life, nor go out of the road of duty or righteousness to get it. For the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; and they that keep his way, he will see to their provision. Let us be diligent in our several callings to maintain ourselves in an honest way, without anxious solicitude and carking cares about the event; but leave the success to God, taking thankfully whatever he sends, and craving his blessing.

8. Lastly, Let us, from the same God, through Jesus Christ, look for eternal life, and the means leading thereto. Be concerned for your souls, and for the bread of life to them. Little bread will serve us till we will need no more. Many of us have eaten most of our bread already, and less may serve us than we are aware of. Our souls must

have food too, and live for ever; therefore be especially concerned for them.

THE FIFTH PETITION

MATTH. 6:12.—And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

THIS petition concerns our souls, as the former did our bodies, and relates to the pardon of sin, which we are here taught to pray for.

In discoursing from this subject, I shall consider,

I. The order of this petition, and the connection of it.

II. The petition itself.

III. Deduce some inferences.

I. I shall consider the order of this petition, and the connection of it. Concerning the order of it, two things may be observed.

1. That it follows the petition for daily bread. Not that bread is comparable, far less preferable to pardon; but that the time of this life is the season of pardon, Heb. 9:27. Now or never we must be pardoned. When we have no more ado with bread, death taking away the necessity of it, we have no more ado with pardon.

2. That is the first of the petitions for spiritual blessings. Because pardon of sin is a leading benefit, and while sin remains unpardoned, the communication betwixt God and the sinner is stopped, Amos 3:2. 'Can two walk together, except they be agreed?' While God has a controversy with the sinner, he pursues it in greater or lesser measure, Psal. 66:18. And the removal of guilt is the opening of the spring of spiritual blessings, to run abundantly; it is the taking the stone off the mouth of the well.

As to the connection, this petition is knit to the former by the particle 'and, Give us this day,' &c. 'And forgive us,' &c. which speaks this, that, in giving bread without forgiving sin, there is death in the pot, Psal. 4:6, and 17:14. There can be little sap or sweet in the bread of the condemned, though, alas! many eat it cheerfully. Like the rich man, Luke 12 they eat, they drink joyfully, while the sword of Justice hangs over their head by a hair. It is because they see not. The looks of an angry Judge, the frowns of a Father, in giving the bread to us, will make it very sapless, to those who discern them. A pardon is the best seasoning to any meal, Eccl. 9:7. Compare Acts 2:37, 46.

II. Let us consider the petition itself, wherein we pray, 'That God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins; which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because by his grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others.' In which we may speak of two things.

1. The thing petitioned.
2. The argument backing it.

FIRST, Let us consider the petition itself, Forgive us our debts. This is the petition, strictly speaking. Upon which I am to enquire,

1. What is meant by debts.
2. What is meant by our debts.
3. Who are meant by us.
4. What is meant by forgiveness.
5. What is the import of this petition.

First, What is meant by debts? Sins are the debts here prayed to be forgiven, Luke 11:4 the worst debts in the world.

1. Why is sin called a debt? Not because it is a non-payment of God's dues, a non-performance of duty, as some say; these things answer not the notion of debt: far less because we owe it to God. But sin is called debt, because it is a taking away from God something for which we owe him an equivalent, Psal. 69:4 'Then I restored that which I took not away.' This notion is the common notion of debts. By sin we rob God of his honour, and owe him reparation.

So in sin as a debt four things are to be considered. (1.) The debtor which is the sinner. Every sinner is a debtor, owing more than he is able to pay. (2.) The creditor is God, at whose mercy the sinner lies. (3.) The valuable thing which the sinner has got away from God for his own use, or rather abuse, is God's honour. (4.) The equivalent which the sinner owes on that account to God, is the reparation of God's honour.

2. What sort of a debt is sin?

(1.) It is a drowning debt, a debt so great as no mortal is able to pay, Matth. 18:24, 25. And all mankind had died in it, if a cautioner able to pay it had not been found, Psal. 89:19.

(2.) It is a disheartening debt for the presence of God. As an insolvent debtor has no will to come in his creditor's sight; so the sinner has no will to come into God's sight till he be brought, Matth. 18:24. This is the reason why many otherwise jovial and merry, when they come into God's presence in duties, are quite heartless.

(3.) It is a debt that the sinner is very ready to diminish, Luke 16:6. As he is unable to pay, so naturally he is unwilling to confess it, and make fair count.

(4.) It is a debt that in the end will be fairly and exactly stated and not the least article forgotten or miscounted. The creditor has given his oath upon it, Amos 8:7. 'The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely, I will never forget any of their works' And the debtor,

whether he will or not, shall be convinced of the justness of the accounts.

(5.) It is a debt that must be paid one way or other. The debtor has but three choices, Pay, Find a cautioner, or Go to prison, Matth. 5:25. None can pay, few will employ the cautioner, therefore most go to prison.

(6.) It is a growing debt. While its growth is not arrested, the interest runs on, and the great sum to-day becomes greater to-morrow, Rom. 2:5.

Lastly, When it is pursued, on the debtor's expence. The pursuit is at the sinner's cost, and he is made to bear the weight of it.

Secondly, What is meant by our debts, or sins? All sins which we are any manner of way chargeable with, and accountable for, before the Lord. Now sin becomes ours four ways.

1. By imputation. So Adam's sin is our sin, Rom. 5:19 and therefore must be pardoned to us otherwise we will be ruined by it, as the heir is ruined by the father's debt.

2. By inherision in us. So the sin of our nature conveyed to us from Adam, consisting in a bent to evil, and backwardness to good, is our sin as subjected in us, Psal. 51:5. This will ruin us also, if it be not forgiven as to the guilt of it: for 'the wages of sin is death,' Rom. 6:23.

3. By personal omission or commission, Jer. 16:10. Thus all our omission of duties, and commission of sins, are our sins which we absolutely need to be forgiven, as treason personally done by us against the King of heaven.

4. By accession any manner of way, to the sins of others, 1 Tim. 5:22. Thus other men's sins, which we become accessory to by commanding, counselling, approving, and the like, become our sins, and involve us in guilt, which we need to be forgiven.

Thirdly, Who are meant by us, for whom forgiveness is asked?

1. Ourselves: for every man is, in the first place, to be concerned for his own pardon. Yet not ourselves only,

2. But others also; not only those who are already of God's family, but all sorts of men living, 1 Tim. 2:1; those only excepted who have sinned the sin unto death, 1 John 5:16. The saints are daily orators at the throne of grace, for the rest of the world, and are concerned for pardon to those who are not concerned for it to themselves. Thus our Lord set the copy, Luke 23:34. 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And Stephen the first martyr followed it, Acts 7:60. 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.'

Fourthly, What is meant by forgiveness or pardon? It is the removal of guilt, which is an obligation to punishment. Guilt is twofold; the guilt of eternal wrath, and the guilt of temporary fatherly anger. Guilt is removed two ways, formally, and declaratively. Pardon is threefold.

1. Pardon of the guilt of eternal wrath. Thus every soul, upon its first closing with Jesus Christ in the gospel, is pardoned, Rom. 5:1. The condemning sentence of the law, binding them over to vindictive justice, to go to the prison of hell, and lie there till they have paid the utmost farthing of their own debt, is removed, Rom. 8:1. 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.'

2. Pardon of the guilt of temporary strokes and fatherly anger, 2 Kings 24:4. The law of grace says, '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 transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail,' Psal. 89:30–33. So the children of God who are beyond the reach of eternal wrath, are oft-times liable to temporary fatherly wrath, which

they need a pardon for, as the child needs the father's pardon. And upon their fresh applications to the Lord Jesus Christ they obtain it.

3. A declarative pardon, which is the pardon manifested to the soul, a sense of pardon, Luke 7:47, 48. 'Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, thy sins are forgiven.' She was a pardoned sinner before, for that is evident from her love to Christ; but now the pardon is intimated to her. The debt is not only forgiven, but the debtor gets the discharge of it.

This threefold pardon is here meant, and each of them is given for Christ's sake, and we obtain them by faith apprehending his obedience and death, Eph. 1:6, 7. Therefore the sea of glass is represented as betwixt the throne and the elders, Rev. 4:6. See Zech. 13:1.

Fifthly, Let us consider the import of this petition. This we take up in these three things.

1. A confessing of debt. The saints own themselves and all others God's debtors, Dan. 9:5. 'We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments.' They will not deny the debt, nor mince it. They see that God is spoiled of his honour by themselves and others, and that they are bound to a reparation. They confess their folly with shame and sorrow.

2. A pleading poverty, and utter inability to pay the debt, Psal. 130:3, 4. 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' Who among all the sons of Adam is able to repair God's honour taken away by sin? There is an infinite evil in the least sin, which no creature is able to expiate, far less Adam's broken family, where the party has nothing to pay, whether he be owing ten talents or ten thousand.

3. A desire of free forgiveness, for Christ's sake, Dan. 9:17. 'Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.' What can the debtor do, who is not able to pay? He must plead to be forgiven, or he is a ruined man. And it is to free forgiveness that the saints do all turn, Psal. 130:3, 4. forecited. And it is a forgiving of the debt to us, though Christ merited it; for we can do nothing to procure it to ourselves. Our pardon indeed stood dear to Christ, but it cost us nothing, Rom. 3:24. 'We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.'

Now, the pardon which the saints are taught here to desire daily, is to be considered agreeably to the state of the parties for whom it is desired.

1. Pardon of the guilt of eternal wrath, is desired for those who are yet out of Christ, and in an unjustified state. Not the saints themselves, who being already justified can never be more actually liable to eternal wrath, Rom. 7:1 forecited. They are not under the law, but under grace, the threatenings of which extend no farther than rods, &c. Psal. 89:30. &c. forecited. It is one thing, what a saint may pray for, apprehending himself liable to eternal wrath, and another what Christ bids him pray for.

2. Pardon of the guilt of temporal strokes, is desired for the saints themselves. For under that guilt they may fall: and being duly considered, it is dreadful, as comprehending all miseries consistent with the love of God.

3. Declarative pardon is also desired for themselves, that they may be delivered from doubts, and fears of eternal wrath, Psal. 4:6. 'Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.'

SECONDLY, Let us consider the argument enforcing the petition, as we forgive our debtors. This is not put in our mouths, to move God to

forgive us, but to move ourselves to believe that our prayer shall be heard, and so to encourage us.

Here I shall shew,

1. Who are meant by our debtors.
2. What is meant by forgiving them.
3. What is meant by out forgiving as we forgive.
4. What encouragement one can draw from his forgiving others, to hope that God will grant the forgiveness desired.

First, Who are meant by our debtors? All such as have sinned against, or wronged us any manner of way, 1 Sam. 2:25. For sin may reach both God and man at once; and in respect of the injury done to us by the sin of others, they are our debtors, owing us a reparation of the injury, which many times they either cannot or will not do.

Secondly, What is meant by our forgiving them? It is our hearty forgiving them the injury done to us, (to forgive the injury against God is not in our power), entertaining no hatred or malice against them, but loving them with a love of good-will, heartily wishing their good, and being ready to do them good, Matth. 5:44, 45. 'But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' But it does not extend to a love of complacency or delight in them, is whom there appears no ground for that, either as men or as Christians, Psal. 26:4. 'I have not sat with vain persons,' says David, 'neither will I go in with dissemblers.'

Thirdly, What is meant by forgiving as we forgive?

1. It does not denote the desire of a perfect equality or likeness betwixt God's forgiving and ours, for at best ours is but lame, and is neither so free nor full as we would desire of God. But the reality of our forgiveness that it is real and sincere, though imperfect (Matth. 18 ult.), for which we can appeal to God.

2. It denotes our forgiving to go before the forgiveness here asked of God for ourselves, Luke 11:4. 'Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.' And this is a demonstrative proof, that the forgiveness the saints here ask for themselves is only the pardon of the guilt of fatherly anger, and the manifestation of pardon, and not the pardon of the guilt of eternal wrath, which concerns their state. For till this last be obtained, one cannot sincerely forgive others, Matth. 18:32, 33. 'Then his Lord, after he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?' No man can sincerely forgive his brother, who does not so love him; and none can love his brother, but he who loves God; and none loves God, but he who is forgiven of God, Luke 7:47. 'Her sins, which are many are forgiven: for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven the same loveth little.'

Fourthly, What encouragement can one draw from his forgiving others, to hope that God will grant the forgiveness desired?

1. What we find that we who are such evil and malignant creatures, so hateful and ready to hate one another, are by the power of God's grace enabled to forgive those who have injured us, we have ground to hope that the most gracious God will forgive the injury against himself, even to those who are under the guilt of eternal wrath, it being easier for him to forgive a talent, than for us to forgive a mite.

2. From our disposition to forgive, we may confirm our confidence in God as our God, and therefore firmly believe that our feet shall be washed, where our whole body has been washed before.

I shall conclude with some inferences.

Inf. 1. Beware of sin, as ye would be of contracting a debt which ye are unable to pay; and make sure your interest in the great Cautioner in time, lest ye be arrested ere ye are aware.

2. See your debts, and mourn over them, and apply to the blood of Christ for the pardon of them all, your imputed, your inherent, and your actual sins.

3. Pretend not to pay your debt by your good hearts, works, mourning, repentance, &c. but betake yourselves to free grace for forgiveness. If ever ye obtain pardon, it will be in the way of free grace.

4. An unforgiving irreconcilable disposition, and revengeful spirit, unfits men for praying. Forgive, if ye would be forgiven. And so it unfits for other duties, and particularly for the Lord's supper, the seal of forgiveness.

Lastly, Come to God through Christ for pardon. He is a forgiving God. Why does he teach us to pray for pardon to ourselves and others, but that there is a fulness of mercy for pardon with him?

THE SIXTH PETITION

MATTH. 6:13.—And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

THIS is the second of those petitions which concern our souls, and it relates to temptation, for warding off that great evil, as the former for the enjoyment of a great good, the pardon of sin. Thus all that are to seek for our personal, spiritual good, is deliverance from sin, from the guilt of it, petition fifth; and from the power of it, petition sixth.

For these being obtained, the soul is happy, since nothing can hurt us but sin.

In discoursing from this subject, I shall shew,

I. The connection of this petition with the former, in the particle and.

II. The petition itself.

III. Apply.

I. I am to shew the connection of this petition with the former, in the particle and. This teaches us, that,

1. No man can with a good conscience sue to God for pardon, nor will he obtain it, who is not resolved to fight against sin in time coming, and to beware of it, Psal. 66:18. There are two things frightful to a penitent, the guilt of past sin, and the power of sin for the future. He is equally concerned for justification and sanctification. They who separate them, act hypocritically, and therefore cannot come speed at the throne of grace. They are unreasonable, in that they would be saved from death, and yet lie under the power of the disease. Unchristian, in that they would make Christ the minister of sin, and his pardon a scone for a sinful life.

2. A pardoned sinner is not past danger. He is in a sickly country; and though he be recovered he is in danger of a relapse. He is still in the field of battle; and though he is cured of one wound, he will be fair to get another, if the Lord do not shield him. Therefore he is to pray, Forgive our debts; And lead us not into temptation, &c. Nay, Satan will be most apt to bait the pardoned sinner, Acts 13:8.

II. Let us consider the petition itself, in which we pray, 'That God would either keep us from being tempted to sin, or support and deliver us when we are tempted.' It consists of two parts.

I. The first is for preventing grace, Lead us not into temptation.

II. The second is for assisting grace, But deliver us from evil.

The FIRST is for preventing grace, Lead us not into temptation.

Here I am to shew,

1. What is meant by temptation.
2. What by leading us into temptation.
3. What is the import of this part of the petition.

FIRST, What is meant by temptation? In general, it is a trial made on a man to see what is in him, and what he will do; and so the matter it is designed to bring forth may be good as well as evil. Thus 'God did tempt Abraham,'* Gen. 22:1. But ordinarily it is taken in an evil sense; and so it is here meant of temptation to sin, which is the plying of a man with some engine or other to draw him into sin. So in temptation four things are to be considered.

1. The party tempted or liable to temptation.
2. The parties tempting, the black instruments of temptation.
3. The bait wherewith the hook of temptation is busked.
4. The mischievous design.

First, The party tempted, or liable to temptation, viz. ourselves and others, who live in this world of pits and snares, Cant. 4:8. Those who are in the upper house are beyond the reach of temptation; no hissing serpent is there; they are not within bow-shot of Satan. But here he rangeth up and down, 1 Pet. 5:8 here he has the length of his chain. Adam in paradise was tempted,* and the second Adam too; the one able to have stood, the other one who could not fall. What wonder then that he attack us, in whom he has bosom friends!

Secondly, The parties tempting, the black instruments of temptation.

1. The grand tempter is the devil, Matth. 4:3. He was an angel of light, but is now turned to a tempting devil. An apostate from God, for whom there is no hope; and being God's irreconcilable enemy, goes about withdrawing men from their allegiance to their sovereign Lord. He is an expert tempter; and has now had the experience of several thousand years in the hellish trade. He has his devices for entrapping poor mortals, and knows how to suit his temptations, as they may best take.

2. Men are tempters to one another. Satan so prevails with them, as to act his part one against another. Sometimes they set themselves to drive others into sin by force, Acts 26:11 sometimes gently to draw them into it, Gen. 39:7. And Satan gets not only wicked men, but many times godly men, yoked to this his tempting work, as in the case of Peter, Matth. 16:22, 23.

3. The lusts of the heart are temptations to all, Jam. 1:14. This is the most dangerous enemy, as being within. These are Satan's trustees, which effectually lead us off the road, and rob us of our purity. They are deceitful lusts; and as the heart of man is furnished with them, it is deceitful above all things, Jer. 17:9.

Thirdly, The bait wherewith the hook of temptation is busked. This is always some seeming good, if it were but the satisfying of a lust or a humour. In drawing or alluring temptations, the bait is some seeming good to be got. Thus was the present world to Demas, and the thirty pieces of silver to Judas. In driving temptations, the bait is some seeming good to be kept, by preventing evil, as those spoke of, Matth. 13:21 who, 'when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by are offended.' And it is no small advantage in temptation, to see through the bait, that it is but a bait to deceive. For so one will perceive, that it will not quit the cost, that by the bargain they will never better their condition, Matth. 16:26. 'For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'

Fourthly, The mischievous design. The design of the great tempter, and the design of the thing, is always the ruin of the party, by falling into sin, and misery by sin. They are snares and traps for ruin, 1 Cor. 10:12 and land men in the bottomless pit.

SECONDLY, What is meant by leading us into temptation? It is holy wise providence so ordering matters about us as we are attacked with temptation to sin, brought upon the stage to fight with temptations, so as we may give a proof of ourselves. Here consider,

How the Lord leads men into temptation; and how it consists with his holiness so to lead them.

1. How the Lord leads men into temptation. He does so only two ways.

(1.) By a providential placing them in such circumstances, as the heart may take occasion of sin from them. Thus innocent Adam was led into temptation, being placed within reach of the forbidden fruit; Joseph, by being alone in the house with an adulterous woman, where yet he came fair off; Achan, by seeing the wedge of gold, and having an opportunity to take it, where he fell by it; Peter by being in the High Priest's hall, where he was attacked. It is on this account that afflictions and persecutions are called temptations, Jam. 1:2 because there the man is beset with such things as are apt to work on his corruptions, and so to lead him into sin, through fear or hope.

(2.) By permitting Satan or his instruments, to tempt them to sin. God has them in a chain, but sometimes, for holy wise ends, the Lord lets them loose, 2 Sam. 24:1 compared with 1 Chron. 21:1. They need no positive order; if God do not restrain them, they will fall on with all their might.

2. How it consists with God's holiness to lead men into temptation. This will appear from the consideration of three things.

(1.) God gave man a power to stand against temptation, if he would, Eccl. 7:29. 'God made man upright.' Thus the stock was put in man's hand, and he is bound still to stand out against it.

(2.) God is debtor to none, either to keep them out of such circumstances, as the heart may not take occasion of sin from thence, or to restrain Satan, or his instruments, from tempting them. Nay, it is just with him so to do, since men often cast themselves unnecessarily upon temptation, and will not be kept back from sin.

(3.) God can bring good out of it, for his own glory, the sinner; profit, or both. Thus Hezekiah and Peter were checked for their pride and vanity, and humbled.

THIRDLY, What is the import of this part of the petition?

1. That we are in danger to be tempted to sin. Temptations are ready for us in this evil world, the devil, the world, and the flesh, are ready to attack us, and break in upon us, if the hedge whereby they are held off were but removed, 1 Pet. 5:8. We walk amidst armed enemies, amongst lions' dens, amidst sparks of fire; were they but let loose, they would set on vigorously.

2. That no temptation can befall us without an over-ruling providence. Though the lion roar, he is in a chain, and cannot set on us, but as he is permitted of God, Job 1:8–10. He who rules the sea, when the waters thereof do roar, has an over-ruling hand over devils, men and the corruptions of our hearts, that no flood can break out, but where the sluice is opened, he withdrawing the restraint.

3. That when the Lord leads us into temptation, we will be sure of an attack. There is no hope in the mercy of our enemies, no hope that they will let an occasion of fighting us slip. He that goes about seeking his prey, will not pass by it, when it is laid in his way. We are ready to let advantages against sin and Satan slip, but they will let none slip, which they have against us.

4. That God may justly lead us into temptations, and leave us under the power of them, Psal. 81:11, 12. How often do we court temptations, and tamper with them, like the fly about the candle till its wings be burnt? How often do we grieve his spirit, and cleave to our idols, over the belly of warnings? What wonder he say, 'Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone?' Hos. 4:17.

5. That we are not able of ourselves to stand against temptation, but if once we be engaged, we are fair to be foiled, Rom. 7:23, 24. And so much the more unable are we, that presumption and self-confidence is our ordinary plague in this case. So that there is much need of fear and trembling, when entering into temptation, lest we be overcome.

6. Lastly, That it is the duty of all, and the disposition of the people of God, to desire they may be kept from engaging with temptations, as with an enemy too strong for them, Matth. 26:42. 'Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.' It is their souls' desire that God would restrain Satan, 2 Cor. 12:8; subdue their lusts, Psal. 119:133; and over-rule all in this evil world, as they may be kept from the evil of it, John 17:15.

I shall conclude this first part of the petition with a few inferences.

Inf. 1. Trials and persecutions, though God may bring good out of them, are not to be desired, but the averting of them prayed for. For they are sharp temptations to sin, wherein though God is much honoured by some, he is much dishonoured by many, Matth. 13:21 forecited, compared with Luke 8:13. 'They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.' And they that desire them are much of the temper of those disciples who would have prayed down fire from heaven, when they knew not what spirit they were of. The desire of them is downright contradictory to this petition; for the language of it is, Lord, lead us into temptation.

2. To run into temptation, cannot be from God's Spirit, but from Satan, and a corrupt, blind, and presumptuous heart. For it is a running into that which we should beg of God that he would not lead us into. If a man be called of God into a place where he is beset with temptations, he may look for grace to be kept up against them, because he is in God's way, and where he has his call to be, Psal. 91:11. 'For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways,' See 1 Kings 18:3. Obadiah was the governor of the house of Ahab, an idolatrous prince. But it is observed of him, that 'he feared the Lord greatly,' even in such a corrupt court. But where a man steps in among temptations without a call from God, he cannot expect such grace to be vouchsafed him. This rashness, self-confidence, and curiosity has cost dear to many.

3. 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,' Matt. 26:41. Praying without watching is a tempting of God: watching without praying is a contempt of God and his grace. There is need to watch, for our enemies are ever lying at the catch, and they are ready to steal a dint of us when we are not aware; and we cannot expect God's help, but when we are in the way of duty. There is need to pray; for watch as we will, our enemies are too strong for us, if the Lord himself do not second us. We must have new supplies of grace, from the grace in Christ Jesus, if we would stand. What then God has joined, put not ye asunder.

The SECOND part of this pition is for assisting grace, But deliver us from evil. Here I shall shew,

1. What is meant by evil.
2. What by deliverance from it.
3. What is the import of this part of the petition.

First, What is meant by evil? By evil is meant,

1. Sin, which is the greatest of evils, the worst of evils, and the cause of all other evils, Amos 5:15. 'Hate the evil.' There is no good in sin, it is an only evil. What makes the devil evil, the world evil, and the heart evil, but sin? Strip them of sin, and there would be no evil in them.

2. Temptation to sin, or whatsoever draws the soul to sin; that is, 'the evil of the world,' John 17:15. The soul-ruining snare that is in any thing, is the evil of it. For as sin is evil, so every thing that has a native tendency to draw into sin is evil.

Secondly, What is meant by deliverance from evil? It stands in two things.

1. To be brought out of it, by way of recovery when fallen into it, Psal. 51:12. Temptation may get the child of God down, his foot may be fast in the snare, and he needs an omnipotent hand to rid him out of Satan's net.

2. To be kept from it, that he fall not into it again. The snares are so many, that it is hard to stand; there is need of a divine power to keep back the sinner's soul from the pit of sin, Jude 14 to take part with him when engaged with a temptation.

Thirdly, What is the import of this part of the petition? We may take it up in these three things.

1. There is no escaping of temptation, in greater or lesser measure, while we are in this world. Though we should watch ever so narrowly, so as not to cast ourselves into temptation; though by no special providence we be led into temptation, yet the heart within is so full of corruption, the world without is so full of snares, and Satan goes so constantly about, that we are in danger every where, and no where safe.

In prosperity we are apt to be proud, vain, carnal, secure; to forget God, and grow tasteless of heavenly things, &c. In adversity, we are

impatient, and discontented, and fretting, and dead to good things, Psal. 119:107. In company we are apt to be infected, or to infect others; and in solitude to become a prey to the tempter. House nor field, bed nor board, civil duties nor religious duties, are not such, but temptations will haunt us at them.

2. God's children would fain be delivered from evil, from sin and temptation to it, Rom. 7:24. 'O wretched man that I am!' says Paul, 'who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' The new nature in them makes them long and groan for it, as ever the captive exile longs for deliverance from captivity. And there is a threefold deliverance which their souls desire here.

(1.) A deliverance in temptation, that God would powerfully support and enable them to stand in the hour of temptation, 2 Cor. 12:8; that when they are engaged in the battle with Satan, the world, and the flesh, the Lord himself would come in for their rescue. They see they are not man enough for their enemies; and they would fain have Heaven to interpose, and cast the balance of victory to their side.

(2.) A deliverance under temptation, Psal. 51:8. Sometimes they are trod under foot by their lusts and passions: they are lying in the mire, and cannot get out. But they look again towards the Lord, as Jonah out of the whale's belly, that he would afford them his helping hand, and so sanctify their lot to them, as all may work for their good.

(3.) A deliverance completely from all sin, and temptation to it, Rom. 7:24 forecited. And thus the petitions of this prayer end with a longing cry for perfect freedom from sin in another world. And this good the Lord brings out of the hard handling which his people get there, that thereby they are made to long for heaven.

3. They believe that God, and he only can deliver them from evil. Without this faith they could not put up this petition; but the belief of the power and willingness of God to grant this deliverance to his people, daily excites them to cry unto him, Deliver us from evil.

I shall conclude this part of the sixth petition with a few inferences.

Inf. 1. Sinning is more terrible than suffering, in the eyes of the children of God. They pray to be delivered from sin absolutely at any rate, cost what it will. And they have good reason for it; for there is more evil in the least sin than in the greatest suffering. In sinning we are conformed to the devil, but in suffering to Jesus Christ. Let us then cry earnestly to God, that he may deliver us from evil.

2. It is a black mark of one that belongs not to God, when there is no parting betwixt him and his lusts. The word and providence works to the delivering the man from his sin, but he will not part with it; he is not content to let it go. It is not the spot of God's children.

3. A careless, fearless way of going through the world, without daily care of being ensnared in sin, is an evidence that the man is at home, and is not travelling Zion-ward. For those who are going through this world as a wilderness, are walking with fear and trembling through it, still saying, Lord, lead us not into temptation.

4. Lastly, It is in the nature of all God's children, to desire to be home. Our Father which art in heaven,—deliver us from evil. They know that this will never be completely and fully answered till they be beyond the clouds: but from their hearts they desire it. Let us evidence ourselves to be the children of God, by our ardent desires for this complete deliverance from sin.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

MATTH. 6:13.—For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and th glory for ever. Amen.

WE come now to the conclusion of the Lord's prayer, which teacheth us, 'to take our encouragement in prayer from God only, and in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory to him. And in testimony of our desire, and assurance to be heard, we say, Amen.'

In this conclusion three things are to be considered.

I. The connection thereof with the petitions.

II. The concluding sentence.

III. The concluding word.

IV. I shall deduce some inferences.

I. Let us consider the connection of this conclusion with the petitions in the particle for: which shews it to contain arguments to be used in prayer for hearing: q. d. Lord, hear as, for the kingdom is thine, the power is thine, and the glory is thine; and teaches us, that when we pray, we should plead and pray, press our prayers, and enforce our petitions, with arguments and reasons, to be heard. I shall shew you,

1. The truth of it.

2. The reason of it.

First, I shall shew you the truth of this pleading. And that it is so, appears from,

1. The Lord himself s teaching us so to do, which shews it to be acceptable to him, since he himself directs us to it. We have the Mediator's direction for it in this pattern of prayer, petition 5. and conclusion. See also Luke 11:5–9. And the more of the Spirit that one has in prayer, he will have his mouth the more filled with arguments.

2. The practice of the saints. See how Moses pleads and reasons with God, Exod. 32:11–13. 'Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians say, for mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of, will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.' See also how Asa pleads, 2 Chron. 14:11. 'Lord it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude; O Lord, thou art our God, let not man prevail against thee.' Job thought it a good way of praying, and longed to be at it, Job 23:4. 'I would fill my mouth with arguments,' says he. The woman of Canaan recovered her arguments, when they seemed to be answered, Matth. 15:22–27. 'Have mercy on me,' says she, 'O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.'

3. The nature of the thing. In prayer men are upon business of the greatest weight, and utmost necessity, and should be in deep earnest in it; and ordinarily the Lord does not answer but to importunity. Is it not very natural in such a case to plead? Yea, what case can men be in that requires more importunate pleading, than that which relates to God's glory, and their everlasting felicity?

Secondly, I come to shew the reason of this pleading, why we should do so.

1. It is not to move, persuade, or bring over the Lord, to give us what we desire. Force of argument may prevail with man to change his mind, but the unchangeable God cannot be turned about with any reason or thing whatsoever. For 'with him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,' Jam. 1:17. 'He is in one mind, and who can turn him?' Job 23:13.

2. But it is to exercise and strengthen our own praying graces, faith and fervency, &c. So that the effect of the pleading is on ourselves, not on God, though the consequent of it, by the divine purpose, is prevailing in prayer. It is true, the design of the pleading person is not on himself, though the effect is; neither ought it to be upon God, to move him, but upon the thing itself, to lay it out before the Lord, in the necessity and reasonableness of it. It is as if a hungry child should apply to his father for bread and the father should say, 'Child, wherefore should I give you bread?' and thereupon the child should say, 'Alas! I am pained with banger, and who will give it me if you refuse? will it not be a reflection on your name, to say your children faint for lack of bread?' While the child pleads thus, the tear strikes in his eye, and his earnestness increases: whereupon he is answered. Here it is evident, that the effect of the pleading is not on the father; it would be but a child's weakness to think that the father is overcome with his arguments, though the consequent of the pleading is the child's getting bread: But the effect of it is plainly on the child himself, though the child designs it not so: And suppose the child to have so much wit, as to know that his arguments are not needed to persuade his father, his design of pleading in that case is on the thing itself, to hold out the necessity and reasonableness of it.

II. Let us consider the concluding sentence, Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Here I shall shew,

1. What is meant by the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever.

2. What is the import of this sentence.

FIRST, I am to shew what is meant by the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever.

1. By the kingdom is meant, not the kingdom of grace, nor the kingdom of glory either; but God's essential kingdom, his universal sovereignty over all persons and all things whatsoever.

2. The power is not authority whereby God may do, but the ability whereby he can do what he will, in that kingdom.

3. The glory is not God's essential glory, but the declarative glory, arising from what he doth in that kingdom, which will shine forth for ever through eternity.

SECONDLY, I am to shew, what is the import of this sentence. It is twofold, praise, and pleading arguments.

First, Praise. Hereby we praise him in our prayers, expressing high and honourable thoughts of him: Thine is the kingdom, &c. Thus we exalt him above ourselves, and all creatures whatsoever.

1. As the universal and absolute Monarch of all the creation, and the only one, 1 Chron. 29:11. 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in heaven and in the earth, is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.' Universal and absolute sovereignty are the flowers of the imperial crown of heaven, and belong to no other. There are many kings on earth, but they are all limited monarchs, and vassals to the King of heaven, who can have no competitor: Lord, thine is the kingdom.

2. As the Omnipotent, and only Omnipotent, *ibid.* The power of men and angels is but a shadow of power, weakness in comparison with God's. None of them all are capable to do what they are capable to will. But his power and will are of equal extent.

3. As the chief end of all things, *ibid.*, and the only chief end. It is the peculiar prerogative of God to say, 'For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it,' Isa. 48:11. All persons and things are for God, God is for himself; and the glory of all redounds to him, and will do for evermore.

This teaches us, That in our prayers we should praise God, as well as petition him. Praise is a comely mixture in all the parts of divine worship. It is most directly tending to God's honour; and it is the piece of worship that will last longest; when prayers, &c. are laid by in heaven, praise will be there for ever.

Observ. This pattern of prayer begins with praise, and ends with it too. For it is necessary, in the entrance, that we have our hearts awed with the divine glory, that so we may be the fitter to pray on: and in the end, that we may carry away high thoughts of God, for the better regulating of our life, in the intervals of duty.

Secondly, Let us consider the pleading arguments in prayer: and they are all taken from God himself. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever.

Observ. This teaches us to take our encouragement from God only in prayer, to draw our arguments from the consideration of what God is. This is a large field to fill our mouths with arguments, and to furnish us with suitable pleas in prayer.

Quest. May we not plead with God upon any thing in ourselves? Ans. (1.) We may not plead upon any worthiness in ourselves or any other creature, Dan. 9:18. 'We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.' 1 Tim. 2:5. 'For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man

Christ Jesus.' (2.) Though in our pleading we may bring in both our evil and our good, yet the force of the plea or argument is not to be laid on either of them, but on something in God himself answerable thereto. David, brings in the greatness of his sin, in his plea for pardon; but the stress of the plea lies not there, but on God's own name, to be magnified greatly by the pardon of great sin, Psal. 25:11. 'For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity for it is great.' Hezekiah brings in his upright walking in the plea for prolonging his life, Isa. 38:3. 'Remember now, O Lord,' says he, 'I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.' But the stress of it lay on God's faithfulness in that promise, 1 Kings 8:25. 'Therefore now, Lord God of Israel, keep with thy servant David, my father, that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me, as thou hast walked before me.'

Now, the plea for hearing, here put in our mouths, is threefold.

1. The kingdom is the Lord's. The stress of the argument from this is, Therefore thou mayest do it, thou hast full authority to grant us whatsoever thou wilt, Matth. 20:15. 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?'

2. The power is the Lord's. Therefore thou canst do whatsoever we ask, over the belly of all opposition, and however hopeless it be in itself, Eph. 3:20. 'He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.'

3. The glory is the Lord's. Therefore thou wilt do it, since thou lovest thy glory, and wilt have glory for evermore from answering our petitions, Josh. 7:9. 'What wilt thou not do unto thy great name?'

III. Let us consider the concluding word, Amen. It imports two things. (1.) Our desire to be heard, q. d. so be it, Rev. 22:20. 'Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus.' And the believer uses this word properly

as a testimony of his desire, when by faith he is enabled and emboldened to plead with God, that he would fulfil his requests, 2 Chron. 20:6, 11. (2.) Our confidence and assurance that we shall be heard; q. d. so certainly it shall be, Rev. 1:7. 'Even so Amen.' And the sincere Christian uses the word with great propriety in the conclusion of his prayers, in testimony of his assurance to be heard, when he is by faith emboldened quietly to rest upon the Lord, that he will fulfil the desires of his heart, 2 Chron. 14:11.

I conclude all with a very few inferences.

Inf. 1. Be fervent and importunate with God in prayer, and set yourselves to plead and pray, as men that are in the deepest earnest about a thing on which their highest interests were suspended, Jam. 5:16. If earnestness and importunity are any where required, here they are highly, nay, absolutely requisite.

2. Let not complaints jumble out praises from your prayers, but still remember that every day affords you as much matter of praise as of request. God's mercies are new every morning; let therefore the sacrifice of praise be a part of the daily sacrifice ye offer unto God. Never bow a knee unto God for supplicating a mercy from him, without praising him for what mercies ye enjoy. This is a very promising way of obtaining the requests ye make at the throne of grace in the confidence of faith.

3. Deeply consider what a God he is with whom you have to do, to fill your mouth with arguments. Pleas in prayer may be fetched, and faith will fetch them, from every divine attribute and perfection; and faith will improve these pleas in such a manner as to procure the good things it applies to the throne for. 'What wilt thou not do to thy great name?' is a standing plea for faith, which can never be rejected. Mercy, holiness, justice, truth, &c. all magnified by the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, will be never-failing pleas in the mouth of the prayer of faith.

4. Lastly, Use not Amen superficially at the end of your prayers, but with earnestness and faith. As for those who think it superstition to say Amen, they are ignorant of the word of God; and I would recommend to them to consult their Bible and Catechism, in order to cure them of that senseless conceit.

And thus, by the good hand of God upon me, I have finished what I intended by way of illustration of the great doctrines of the Christian religion, with respects to faith and practice, as compendized, from the Holy Scriptures, in our Shorter Catechism. I am sensible of many defects in the prosecution of such a large work; for who is sufficient for these things? but I have endeavoured, according to the measure of grace given unto me, to declare unto you what I am persuaded is truth, agreeable to the word of God, the rule and standard of all religious truth. And I would now ask you, What entertainment have ye given to the great and important truths laid before you, from the Lord's word, in the course of these sermons, in which I have been engaged a considerable part of several years? Do ye now believe? Have ye embraced these doctrines with a divine faith, a faith of the operation of God? have ye received the truths into your hearts? and are your hearts moulded into the image of them? Are they become the food and nourishment of your souls, so as ye are made to esteem them more than the food that is necessary for the support of your natural life? Are they written on your hearts, and impressed on your consciences, so as to become an effective principle of new obedience? Is the effect of them the sanctification of your hearts and lives? and is the result of the whole an earnest desire to know the truth more fully and clearly, and to regulate every motion and desire of your hearts, every word of your mouths, and every action of your lives, by the truth, so as ye may be enabled through grace to do the whole will of God? If these catechetical discourses have not produced some such effects upon you, or any of you, alas! they have been all lost as to any saving benefit to your souls, and will be a swift and terrible witness against you in the day of the Lord Jesus. O, Sirs! consider, bethink yourselves, recollect the great and important truths I have been laying before you, drawn from the pure and uncorrupted fountain of

the Lord's word, and let them have a suitable and lasting influence on your hearts and lives. If ye imprison the truth, and hold it in unrighteousness, by resisting and opposing its effect, which is sanctification, John 17:17 and refusing to let it rule over you, and raising up your lusts against it, and unrighteously smothering and suppressing it, ye do so at a terrible risk: 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness,' Rom. 1:18. It is very probable that many of you at least have acquired more knowledge of the principles of religion, than ye had formerly; and I am obliged to own, that your knowledge of the truths thereof is as much generally, as ever I observed in other places. But is it sanctifying saving knowledge, or only merely speculative, floating in your heads, without having a due and efficacious influence upon your hearts? Alas! I must say, that truth is held prisoner with a witness among us, and that our lives are not answerable to our light, and I am much afraid it may bring wrath on the place. I therefore earnestly beseech and exhort one and all of you, to study to know the truth as it is in Jesus, to have a heart experimental knowledge thereof, a real feeling and sensation of the sweetness, virtue, and excellency thereof, in your minds, so as ye may taste indeed that the Lord is good. This knowledge alone will be available to your salvation, while all other knowledge is quite useless and unprofitable as to any salutary effect. For says our Lord, John 17:3. 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' But the further pressing of this experimental knowledge of Christ, I must defer to another occasion, with which I shall conclude this work.

A DISCOURSE ON THE EXPERIMENTAL KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

PHIL. 3:10.—That I may know him.—

A MERE speculative knowledge of Christ, and of the great doctrines of the gospel, however laboriously acquired and extensive it may be, is of small importance in itself, and quite vain and ineffectual, if it be not sanctified, and issue in experimental knowledge of Christ, and a real feeling of the beauty and excellency, and efficacy of divine truth on the heart. A man may have a competent, nay, a very extensive acquaintance with the whole doctrines of the Christian religion, as laid down in the scriptures, and of which we have an excellent compend in the shorter Catechism, which I have been endeavouring to explain to you for a series of years; yet if you have not the experimental knowledge of Christ, all your knowledge is in vain as to the salvation of your souls. I therefore come, as a conclusion of the whole, to press this experimental knowledge upon you, as what alone will be available for any saving purposes.

In the preceding verse, the apostle speaks of the gain he received in Christianity in point of justification, flowing from the soul's closing with Christ, and renouncing all other; and here he speaks of that gain in point of sanctification. And first, more generally, That I may know him. Might not the Philippians hereupon have said, And do not you know Christ, who have preached him so long? There are two ways of knowing, one by hearing of a thing, another by sight and feeling: one by the relation of another, another by experience, as one knows honey, and all the virtues of it, by report, which he believes, another testing it himself. The apostle knew Christ by faith, when he first believed in him; and here he would have the spiritual feeling and experience of him, finding by experience him to be what he has heard and believed him to be. He had something of this, but he would still have more.

The doctrine arising from the text is,

DOCT. 'The experimental knowledge of Christ is the sum of practical religion,' 1 Cor. 2:2. 'flowing from faith, to be studied by all.' In handling this point I shall,

I. Shew what this experimental knowledge is.

II. Confirm the point.

III. Make application.

I. I am to shew what this experimental knowledge of Christ is. It is an inward and spiritual feeling of what we hear and believe concerning Christ and his truths, whereby answerable impressions are made on our souls, Psal. 34:8 like that of the Samaritans, John 4:42 when they said unto the woman, 'Now, we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.' There is a savoury report of Christ spread in the gospel; faith believes it, and embraces him for what the word gives him out to be; and then the believing soul doth come and see. There is a glorious scheme of the lovely perfections of Christ drawn in the Bible, and faith believes that he really is what he is said to be; and then that scheme begins to be drawn over again in the Christian's experience, and this is always drawing more and more till he come to glory. It is just as if some eminent physician should give a friend remedies for all diseases he may be liable to; and when he leaves them with him, he lets him know that such a remedy is good for that distemper, and another is good for such another, &c. Now, he knows them all; but he falls sick, and he takes the remedy fit for his disease, and it proves effectual. Now, the man knows the remedy by experience, which he knew before by report only. Even so Christ is given as all in all to a believer, and he makes use of Christ for his case, and that is the experimental knowledge of him. I will illustrate these by some instances.

1. The scripture says of Christ, He is the way to the Father, John 14:6. Now, the man that has tried many ways of attaining access to God, and communion with him, and is denied access, and can find no way to come to God, at length comes by Jesus Christ, renouncing all things else, leans only on his merit and intercession, and he finds an open door of access to God, and communion with him. This flaming

sword he finds removed, and him who was still before a consuming fire, he finds now a warming sun to his soul. Here is experimental knowledge of Christ. Hence the apostle says, Rom. 5:1, 2 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.'

2. Christ's blood 'purgeth the conscience from dead works to serve the living God,' Heb. 9:14. Now, the experimental Christian knows from experience, that unremoved and unrepented-of guilt defiles the conscience, leaves a sting in it, unfits him to serve the Lord, as much as a man in filthy rags is unfit to stand before a king: it breeds in the heart an unwillingness to come before God, and mars his confidence: he tries to repent, overlooking the blood of Christ, but it will not do. He looks to an absolute God, and his heart is indeed terrified, but nothing softened. At length he looks to God in Christ, throws the burden of his guilt, and dips his soul in the sea of Christ's blood; and then the heart melts for sin, the sting is taken out of the conscience, the soul is willing to converse with God, and is enabled to serve him, as a son doth a father.

3. Christ is fully satisfying to the soul, Psal. 73:25. Hab. 3:17, 18. We all know this by report; but the Christian experimentally knows it by a spiritual sensation in the innermost parts of his soul. Sometimes, when all his enjoyments have been standing entire about him, he has looked with a holy contempt on them all, saying in his heart, These are not my portion. His heart has been loosed from them, and he has been made willing to part with them all for Christ, in whom his soul rejoiced, and in whom alone he was satisfied. Sometimes, again, all outward things have been going wrong with him, yet he could comfort, encourage, and satisfy himself in Christ, as David did in a great strait, 1 Sam. 30:6. He has gone away to his God and his Christ, and with Hannah returned with 'a countenance no more sad,' 1 Sam. 1:18.

4. Christ helps his people to bear afflictions, and keeps them from sinking under them; and he lifts up their heads when they go through these waters, Isa. 43:2. Now, the Christian meets with affliction; and he takes a good lift of his own burden, for it is the thing he thinks he may well bear. But his burden is too heavy for him. He wrestles with it: but the more he wrestles, it grows the heavier, and he sinks the more. At length he goes to Christ, saying, 'Lord, I thought to have borne this burden, but I am not able; I will sink under it, if I get not help:' 'Master, save us, for we perish.' And so he lays it over on the great Burden-bearer, and he is helped, Psal. 28:7. Now, the man, when he thought he could do all, could do nothing; and when he thinks he can do nothing, he can do all, 2 Cor. 8:9, 10.

5. Christ is made unto us 'wisdom,' 1 Cor. 1:30. The experimental Christian finds, that when he leans to his own understanding, he mistakes his way at mid-day; and all that he reaps of it, is, that in the end he has himself to call 'beast,' and 'fool,' for his error. But when into comes he difficulties, that he sees he knows not how to extricate himself out of, and is wary, and lays out his case before the Lord, and gives himself up as a blind man to be led by the Lord, he finds he is conducted in the way he knew not; and the result is, to 'bless the Lord who has given him counsel.'

6. Lastly, Christ is made unto us 'sanctification,' 1 Cor. 1:30. Now, the Christian falls secure, does not make use of Christ, and then are ever he is aware, he is like Samson without his hair. When he awakens, he sees his case is all gone to wrack, the course of sanctifying influences is stopt, and graces are lying in the dead thraw, and lusts are strong and rampant. He falls a grappling with them, but is worsted still; until he come to himself, and acknowledge his utter weakness to stand in this battle, and renew the actings of faith in Christ; and then 'out of weakness he is made strong, waxes valiant in fight, and turns to flight the armies of the aliens,' Heb. 11:34. He flings down the confidence in himself, like the broken reed that has pierced his hand; and though the promise lie before him, like the rod turned into a serpent, which unbelief tells him he would be too bold to meddle

with, he ventures and takes the serpent by the tail, and it becomes the rod of God in his hand.

Let these suffice for examples of experimental religion.

II. I proceed to confirm the point: or to shew that the experimental knowledge of Christ is the sum of practical religion. Consider,

1. The scripture testimonies concerning this. To learn religion in the power of it, and in all the parts of sanctification, is to lean Christ. Hence the apostle says, Eph. 4:20–24. 'But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts: and be renewed in the Spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created, in righteousness and true holiness.' There needs no more to be known, for that comprehends all, 1 Cor. 2:2. 'I determined not to know any thing among you,' says Paul, 'save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.' It is 'eternal life,' John 17:3. It is a pledge of eternal life; it is eternal life begun. Yea, Christ is the sum and substance of a believer's life, Phil. 1:21. 'To me to live is Christ.'

2. All true religion is the creature's conformity or likeness God, made by virtue of divine influences, transforming the soul into the divine image. Now, there can be no conformity to God but through Jesus Christ; for he is the only channel of the conveyance of the divine influences, and God can have no communication with sinners but through him. He alone makes us partakers of the divine nature, 2 Cor. 4:6.

3. Whatever religion or holiness a man seem to have, that doth not come and is maintained this way, is not of the right sort. It is but nature varnished over: for 'he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father.'

The soul's closing with Christ by faith, opens the way to this experimental knowledge of him; so that whosoever would know Christ thus, must in the first place so close with him.

(1.) Faith closing with Christ, believes he is such an one as he is held out in the gospel, gives credit to the report; and it is the want of this that mars this knowledge, Isa. 53:1.

(2.) Faith closes with Christ to that very end, that the soul may so know him. The soul stands in need of Christ in all that wherein he is held out as useful to a sinner, and faith takes him for that.

(3.) Faith unites the soul to Christ, and so makes way for this knowledge, which is the happy result of this union.

I come now to a word of improvement, which I shall discuss in an use of exhortation. O Sirs! labour to be experimental Christians, to have the inward feeling of what you hear and say ye believe concerning Christ. Why will ye stand in the outer court all your days? Come forward, and dip into the heart of religion. Come in where the world's ungracious feet could never carry them. And be not satisfied with less of religion, than what the beloved disciple in the name of believers says he felt, 'Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ,' 1 John 1:3. This is a weighty and seasonable point. To enforce this exhortation, I offer the following motives.

1. Religion is not a matter of mere speculation to satisfy men's curiosity, but a matter of practice. Men's eternal state lies at the stake, which can never be brought to a comfortable issue by a speculative knowledge, more than a man can be cured by the knowledge of a remedy, without application of it. An unexperimental professor is like a foolish sick man, who entertains those about him with fine discourses of the nature of medicines, but in the mean time he is dying himself for want of application of them.

2. The sweet of religion lies in the experience of it: hence the Psalmist says, 'My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, Psal. 63:5. No man can have the idea of the sweetness of honey like him that tastes it, nor of religion like him that feels the power of it. One reads the word, and it is tasteless to him; to another it is sweeter than the honey comb; why? because he feels the power of it on his spirit, Psal. 19:11. Religion would not be such a burden to us as it is, if we could by experience carry it beyond dry sapless notions: it would be a reward to itself, and so chain the heart to it.

3. All the profit of religion to ourselves lies in the experience of it, Matth. 7:22. What avails all the religion men have in their heads, while it never sinks into the heart? Knowledge without experience will no more sanctify a man, than painted fire will but or the bare sight of water will wash. Ah! what avails that knowledge to a man, by which he is never a whit more holy, nor less: a slave to his lusts? True, it may do good to others, as the profit of the carpenter's gift came to Noah, while they themselves perished in the deluge. Light without heat serves only to shew the way to hell, where there is scorching heat without light. Gifts without grace are like a ship without ballast in a boisterous sea, that cannot miss to sink. And when such an one is sinking into hell, his gifts will be like a bag of gold on a drowning man, precious in itself, but will only help to sink him the faster.

2. The experimental Christian is the only Christian whose religion will bring him to heaven. Heaven in effect is but a perfect experimental knowledge of Christ, where the saints will for ever feed upon that sweetness they have heard to be in him. And there is no attaining of heaven, unless men first begin on earth to know Christ thus.

5. Lastly, It is absolutely necessary to qualify a man to go on and hold right in an evil time. And surely, if ever there was need for it, there is need now.

(1.) The experimental Christian is fitted thereby to suffer for Christ, because he has the testimony within himself, that the way which the world persecutes is the way of God. No arguments give such a certainty of the truth of religion as experience does.

(2.) When wickedness prospers, and piety is oppressed, experimental religion keeps a man from being led away with the error of the wicked, Mal. 3:16.

(3.) When many stumbling-blocks are laid in the way, especially in divisions and church-contentions, which make many wicked men think there is no reality in religion at all; yet the righteous, in sad a time, shall hold on his way.

This is a very weighty point; and to illustrate it a little further. I will,

1. Give evidence that experimental religion is very rare.
2. Point out some causes of it.
3. Shew how it may be obtained.
4. Press you to seek after it by some considerations.

First, I am to give evidences that experimental religion is very rare in our day.

1. The little relish that men have of the word either preached or read. Experience makes the word savoury; hence David says 'I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil,' Psal. 119:162. How many are there to whom the word is tasteless as the white of an egg? Their fancy may be tickled by the discovery of something which they knew not before: but, alas! they have no inward sensation of the thing wrapt up in the words of truth.

2. The little knowledge of the word by experience. The best commentary on the ills of the heart is the word; and the best

commentary on the word is experience. These reflect light one upon another. The experimental Christian reads his heart in the word; he gets it opened and anatomised there, Heb. 4:12, 13. It is the looking-glass wherein he sees it. And he understands the word by experience, John 2:17 and 7:16. The doctrine of truth is according to godliness, and godliness, in the practice of it, makes truth shine the more into the soul.

3. The little precise and nice walking there is among professors, Eph. 5:14. Christians should 'walk circumspectly;' and it is the native effect of experimental religion, Isa. 38:15. And the reason is plain: The experimental Christian finds how a wrong step will provoke the Spirit to depart, and how communion with God cannot be kept up in a loose and irregular way, Psal. 66:18. He sees how small a thing exposeth to the dint of the threatening; and that the way of getting the promise told out to him, is the way of tender walking, which counts no sin little. But, alas! for that miserable latitude that prevails in the walk of the generation, who take such a woful liberty in their words and actions, as we may say with the prophet, Mic. 7:1, 2. 'Wo is me, for I am as when they have gathered the summer-fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first-ripe fruit. The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood: they hunt every man his brother with a net.'

4. The little advantage religion has by the conferences of professors. People may go into many companies ere they get one from whence they may come forth with a heart more inflamed with love to God and Christ, and the practice of godliness, because they can meet with few like him who said, 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul,' Psal. 66:16. Alas! there is little of heaven in the converse of Christians at this day; which says there is but little of it in their hearts. We have sat down on time's things; and as for the matters of another world, we have little relish of them. A philosopher bade one speak, that he might see him, Col. 3:16.

5. Lastly, The general security that prevails among all ranks, though we never saw the day wherein it was more unseasonable. Did experimental religion prevail, we would be waiting on the Lord in the way of his judgments, as the church did, Isa. 26:8, 20. God help us! Scotland's stroke seems to be walking in the dark, with feet of wool, that we will never hear the sound of, till we feel its iron hands. It is very like some fearful surprise is abiding as. The dispensations of our day are in their own nature rousing dispensations; but we are not at all awakened by them, more than we were when there was not a pin in our tabernacle loosed. There are different opinions and practices in these matters; but whose heads soever are right, we think the hearts of all parties are wrong. And among all our unhappy differences, we have a more unhappy agreement in a spirit of slumber that has seized all together. And what shall be the end of these things?

Secondly, I shall point out some of the causes of the scarcity of experimental religion.

1. The Lord has a controversy with our mother, and therefore has withdrawn, and it fares the worse with the children. She was some time Hephzibah, and her land Beulah; but now her gold is become dross, and her wine mixed with water. She has forgotten her husband, and has been gadding after other lovers. She hath cast herself into a loathsome disease; her kindly heat and warmth is gone; any thing of it that is left has struck out to the outward parts, leaving a key-cold heart within. And, by all appearance. she will not be cured, till blood be let of her.

2. People's spiritual senses are dulled with the luscious sweets of a present world. Farms and merchandise take away people's appetites for the marriage-supper, Matth. 22:4, 5. The devil makes birdlime of the things of the world to catch professors, that they find, when they would get upward, their feet stick in the mire. Many of us, I trow, when our worldly incomes were less, our spiritual incomes were

more. Or, if the world go against people, their spirits are so embittered, that they find no sweetness at all in religion.

3. Religion is not made people's business, but just a by-hand work. Men are like the mole, whose abode is in the earth; and though sometimes it come above ground, it hastes in again to it hole, to be in its element. They will say their prayers indeed evening and morning; but for walking with God in the interval of duties, they know nothing about it. Their religion is over when duties are over. They are like a man that takes physic indeed, but he just vomits it up again when he has got it, giving it no time to work, Gen. 6:9. Religion's chance-customers will never grow rich by it.

4. People's not holding hand to any attainment they make in religion, like 'the slothful man, not roasting that which he took in hunting,' Prov. 12:27. They are, it may be, at some pains to earn something in religion, but they put it in a bag with holes. Sometimes they are in a fair way to gain experience of religion, they get some taste of it, but then they do not follow on, Hos. 6:3. The spark is kindled, but they let it go out; they do not feed it, and presently they have a cold coal to blow again.

5. Lastly, Formality in religion, when people content themselves with outward worship, doing the work, but make it not their business to worship God in the spirit; by faith in him, love, dependence, fear, hope, patience, &c. It is these and the like graces that bring in the experimental knowledge of Christ and religion into the soul. These are they that get forward to God, even to his throne. And duties without them are useless and vain, like liquor that has lost all the spirits.

Thirdly, I come to shew, how we may become experimental Christians.

1. Let us labour to be Christians indeed, and lay the foundation well in a serious and sincere closing with Jesus Christ. That is to say, let

us, under a conviction of the reality and necessity of religion, give away and consecrate ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us forsake the world for him, and look on ourselves as men bound to another world, under the conduct of the Captain of the Lord's hosts. And while we go through it with him, let us resolve to go lightly along, and not dip, Cant. 4:8. Let us forsake sin for him, and leave these husks to feed upon himself, for the manna will not fall till the Egyptian provision be done. And men need not think that the dainties of heaven will be brought to the table, where the soul is sitting at dust which is the serpent's meat. Labour to know them no more, not to seek your satisfaction from them, and ye shall know Christ.

2. Receive the truths of the word by faith. If you would be experimental Christians, let the word dwell in you richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Hear it, and read it attentively, and with application; meditate on it; let it be your constant companion and bosom-oracle, to which you may always resort for direction, caution, and encouragement. And ye will soon find the commandment is a light, and that by it ye are warned, and that the promises have a sweet accomplishment, in the way of duty, in the experience of the Christian. Labour to get the divine faith of the word. O, Sirs! it is not easy to believe scripture-truths, Luke 24:25. Admit the conviction; look to the Lord for grace to believe, and keep up the struggle with unbelief.

3. Be diligent observers of your own way, the way of your heart and life. A man that lets his heart run at random, and does not review what passeth there, can never be an experimental Christian. But every serious review of the heart would give you a new experimental confirmation of scripture-truths. There are two great depths that the experimental Christian wades much in, viz. the depths of wickedness in the heart, and the depth of perfection and fulness in Christ. Be much in self-examination.

4. Be careful observers of providence; the providence of God towards the church, and towards yourselves in particular, Psal. 107 ult. Providence is a river that brings down the rich ore of experiences, which are to be gathered by Christian observation. The Bible is the word that God preacheth to the world; and providence is the application of the doctrine. In the Bible, the word is brought to our ears, and in providence it is set before our eyes; though most of us are blind as moles, and see it not; but the experimental Christian doth see.

5. Lay it down for a conclusion, that religion is a thing that lies inwardly, and that it is quite another thing than a parcel of external performances; that it is a conforming of the soul to the image of Christ, by a close application to him, and a real participation of his Spirit, and virtue of his blood. And therefore seek that, and seek it on till ye find his truth comes not into your heart in word only, but in power, gradually killing sin and self, and conforming you more to his image. And go not to duties as one that is only to hear or speak, but to feel or taste. And when your hand is once in, that ye begin to taste how gracious the Lord is, hold hand to it, and ye shall find his going forth prepared as the morning.

Fourthly, I conclude with some considerations to stir you up to this exercise.

1. Experimental religion is a sort of heaven on earth. Heaven is the eternal feeling of that goodness which is in God the chief good. It is his eternal pouring out of his goodness into the souls of his people, making them drink of those rivers which they heard were at his right hand. Now, ye may begin it here with tasting the word of life. That will make great delight, as the full enjoyment makes perfect joy there.

2. There are none who being capable of that enjoyment on earth, that get the first taste of it in heaven. No; they all begin it here, John 17:3. For God first gives men a taste of Christian experience, and then they

desire the full enjoyment of it, and they get it in heaven. And this is the reasonable way with the rational creature. Whosoever taste not here, shall not drink above.

3. The experimental Christian has the counterpart of the Bible in his breast, though imperfect. He has things old and new to bring out of his treasure, that answer to scripture doctrines and promises, as the copy to the original. The experimental Christian is a walking Bible. He has a body of divinity formed of experiences, which is an excellent sort of learning, a thousand times preferable to all the raw unfelt notions of noisy professors, that are like the sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

4. The experimental Christian is fit to sail to heaven, whatever wind be blowing; for he hath both sail and ballast. He has experienced of the goodness and faithfulness of God, and of the sanctifying power of truth; that is sail that will carry him through in all storms; and he has experience of the corruption of his own nature, the deceit of his own heart, and of his pitiful weakness; and that will be ballast to him. For want of these in time of trial, few get through.

(1.) It is very hard, without experience of religion, to stand in a time when the proud contemners of God seem to be most happy: when the sun shines bright on the way of wickedness and apostasy from God, and nothing but clouds and darkness appear in the way of holiness, Mal. 3:15, 16. It is strange if those who never felt more sweetness in religion than in the world, do not at such a time turn their back on it altogether: but the experimental Christian will not do so: for 'the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger,' Job 17:9.

(2.) When the night of error overtakes a church, and errors like locusts swarm abroad, how hard is it then to stand without experience! 2 Thess. 2:10. Where truth sinks not into the heart, but floats in the head, it makes itching ears, to which novelties have easy access. They to whom old truths are unsavoury, lie a pray to new

notions. And hence it has come to pass, that many noted professors have been carried away in such a time. But he that has tasted of the power of truth, will say from his experience, 'The old is better,' Luke 5 ult.

(3.) When divisions enter into a church, it is hard to keep right without experimental religion. Division is a great plague from the Lord, a stain on the beauty of the church, and a dreadful snare to men. When church-builders are like Babel-builders, how can the work thrive? It turns some quite off from all religion; while they see one going one way, and another another way, they know not whom to follow, and they cast off all together. Others, whose religion was never so deep as the bottom of their hearts; exhaust the whole of their vigour on the controverted points, and so they become dead in the vitals of godliness. So that, unless people be experimental Christians, and exercised to godliness too in the time, having the ballast I spoke of before, they will run into terrible excess of selfishness, judging not only practices, but hearts: a very unchristian employment!

(4.) When great men, and good men are falling, how hard is it to stand, unless men have a witness to the truth from within? God, in his holy providence, for the further trial of men permits the fall of men of name for gifts and piety: and when these fall, readily they fall not alone, but as mighty oaks break down others about them, unless they be well rooted and grounded. And therefore they will never bring their religion to a good account, whose religion is only to do as others do.

(5.) Lastly, When it comes to hard and sharp personal persecution, especially to resisting unto blood. When extreme hardships, even death itself, are laid in the balance with an unfelt religion, it is hard to think how one should stand who has had no experience of the power of it. Should God give us up into the hands of a bloody antichristian enemy, it would not be hard for them that have not been sealed by the Spirit, to refuse the mark of the beast.

But I shall give more particular directions towards attaining experimental religion.

1. Fix your eyes on the particular evils of your heart and life, and ply closely the reformation of them by the Spirit. Alas! what are we doing in the way of mortification of sin? Experimental religion is a dying to sin, by virtue of our union with Christ. What use have we for Christ, if not to 'save us from our sins?' Matth. 1:21. But the use many make of Christ is to save them and their sins. They will drink, swear, lie, cheat, and do unjustly still, and they will call these infirmities, or very little things, that need not disturb a man; and they will lick themselves whole with their believing; and on a new temptation go just back again to them. Sirs, this is to make Christ the minister of sin, and to sin because grace abounds. The running the round between swearing and confessing, will make men fall down at length into the pit, whence they will never rise again, Prov. 29:1. If Christ cure thee not of thy disease, thou wilt never get life by him.

Therefore, I say, ply reformation of heart and life closely. It will not be wishing that will do it; ye must put your hand to the work. It will cost mourning groans under the weight of sin, believing looks, and vigorous endeavours against it. Is there a thing that is your weak side? pray remember thy soul is at stake; if it overcome thee, thy soul is gone; and if ever thou see heaven, thou must get above it, Matt. 5:29. Rev. 3:21. O mind that passage, Mark 10:21. 'One thing thou lackest,' &c. Look to thy spots in the glass of the law, and quickly set about purging them. Thou hast, may be, a carnal worldly heart: fall on to get it spiritual and heavenly; an ill tongue, get it bridled; or an offensive carriage, get it mended.

2. Continue at the work, for the victory is not got but by degrees. The interruptions that take place in our plying the work of religion, make it still the more difficult. The miserable halts we make in the exercise of godliness, do but weaken us, and give the enemy more time to recruit. And they that cannot digest the making religion their business, are not fit for heaven. Heaven is an eternal triumph; how

can they be capable of it then that make it not their business to fight, or that are always overcome, instead of being overcomers? It is a rest, therefore it presupposeth a labour; not so much the toil of business in the world, for the most carnal have as much of that as professors, but a rest from labour against sin.

3. Take often notice what progress ye are making. Consider with yourselves, Have I got any more victory over my passions, my lusts, and my prevailing iniquity? Is there a cubit added to my spiritual stature? Am I going backward or forward? Sirs, people that are at pains with a farm, they count their profit, to see whether they be winners or losers: if any thing has been mismanaged to their loss, they endeavour to mend it the next time; and if they find they are gainers, they are encouraged to redouble their pains. But, alas! what pains men are at about religion, is bestowed on it as if they cared not whether they prospered or not; and therefore they have no experience.

4. Look after the profit of duties. We should never hear a sermon, but should inquire, when we have come from it, Now, what have I made of this? where did it touch me? what evil of my heart has it discovered? what influence has it had on me to fit me more for my journey and work? Sermons are not easy to some of you, that are far off from the place of public worship: ye would think it a great deal to go one mile, or two, three, four, or five miles in vain, in other cases. Look after your prayers, as the Psalmist did, Psal. 5:3. Ye would think it much if ye were to ask a request of your neighbour, and yet get no answer, or a refusal. O why then do ye not consider how your prayers are accepted by the prayer-hearing God? I assure you, if ye would fall upon this way, ye would soon find the good of it.

5. Converse with experimental Christians about experimental religion. There is a wonderful diffidence that professors have in one another at this day, Matth. 24:12. I verily believe this would be a good way to cure it, if those that have any experience of religion would modestly bring it forth to the edification of others. There is

nothing that more endears Christians one to another than this. It is an unchristian-like thing in professors to despise converse about practical godliness and Christian experience. And there is more of the wisdom of the serpent than the harmlessness of the dove, in people's locking up in their own breasts all their sense of practical godliness, when it might be brought forth to the glory of God, and the good of others. I believe this way has been the cause of so much jealousy, suspicion, and division among professors; and has run out all Christian conference into vain jangling about the controversies of the time.

6. Be very nice as to the point of sin and duty, Psal. 133:2. Sudden resolutions in matters which will allow deliberation, are often to be suspected. Sometimes the matter of sin and duty is of that nature, that there is no time to deliberate; all that can be done is, to look to the Lord for immediate clearness, and the Christian shall have it, Prov. 4:12. 'When thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.' Compare Matth. 10:19. 'But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.' Sometimes the Christian may have time to deliberate, and then God's ordinary way is to clear men step by step, Prov. 4:12. 'When thou goest thy steps shall not be straitened.' Say not, the way is plain at first glance in this case; for the Spirit of God bids thee 'ponder the path of thy feet,' Prov. 4:26. If a way be such as our own heart at the very first inclines to, I say it ought the rather to be narrowly examined, seeing in scripture-language the way of our own heart is of no good name. And suppose the inclination of the man's heart does really fall upon the right side in this case, yet this is no Christian resolution, but a stumbling on the right way, which God will never accept. Therefore men that would act as Christians in the point of sin and duty, should lay aside prejudices, trample their inclinations under foot, lay the matter before the Lord, and themselves open to conviction there, as a piece of clean paper, on which God may write what he sees meet, pondering all things with a holy jealousy over their own hearts, lest they be biassed by their own

inclinations and preconceived opinions. I am sure much of God is to be found in this way.

7. Acknowledge God more in your temporal concerns, Prov. 3:6. Are we Christians? let us depend on God for all things in this life and the other. We are directed to pray about them, the promises are about them, and therefore we should wait on God for them. Many a sweet experience have the saints got in temporal things, when they have been helped to lay them before the Lord, and leave them there without anxiety, in the use of the means.

Lastly, Have a precise respect to all the commands of God, and be truly strict in your lives; that is, deal with men as believing God's eye is upon you, and with God as if the eyes of men were upon you. Never look on the authority of the multitude as sufficient to make that no fault, which will not abide strict examination by the word of God. Let the command of God prevail with you; and whatsoever liberty ye may take for ought that men can say or do to you, let that be a sufficient restraint. Thus may ye attain experimental religion.

THE RIGHT IMPROVEMENT OF A TIME OF SICKNESS AND MORTALITY

TWO sermons preached on a congregational fast-day, at Ettrick, April 27, 1720, on occasion of the great sickness and mortality then prevailing.

PSAL. 90:12.—So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

THE SERMON IN THE FORENOON

THIS text is a prayer suitable to the dispensation of this day. While we stand and see so much sickness and mortality prevailing among us, they have stout hearts indeed, who look not up to the Lord with this or the like petition in their hearts, So teach us, &c.

This psalm was calculated for a dying time, being supposed to be penned upon the occasion of that sentence passed in the wilderness, Num. 14:28, &c. concerning the death of those from twenty years old and upward who came out of the land of Egypt, so as none of them should enter Canaan, but Caleb and Joshua. It was penned, I say, by Moses, who saw, in the space of forty years, six hundred thousand men swept off by death, besides women and children.

There are three things insisted on in the body of this psalm, and summed up together, ver. 10, 11. A short life, a sure death, and a severe judgment. And here is the use of them, O to consider these so as to be wise for our souls, O for a sanctified use of the sad dispensation. In the words there is,

1. A lesson desired to be learned, (1.) The lesson itself, of counting or numbering of our days; i. e. of considering them duly and seriously, as he who tells any thing before him, looks to every one of the number, and makes a just reckoning. (2.) The teacher of whom only we can learn this is God himself. It is a difficult lesson to learn to purpose. Many good counters, who can dextrously count great sums, are quite out in the calculation of their days, Luke 12:19, 20. There is a necessity of the teaching of the Spirit, in order to learn this divine arithmetic.

2. The standard of proficiency in this lesson, That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom; i. e. that we learn it so as we apply ourselves to serious godliness, which is the only wisdom: Heb. that we may bring in; a heart of wisdom, i. e. a wise heart. We have naturally light and foolish hearts; but he, and only he, learns this lesson well that brings in a serious, religious, and wise heart, from the school of the word and providence, where that lesson is taught. All under this standard

are but bunglers at the lesson, they have not yet learned it truly: though they can talk of it, viz. the shortness and vanity of life, they are never a whit the wiser for all that, in respect of their souls; they have not yet got it by heart, but only by head; and therefore they are still the carnal, careless men they were before.

The words being thus explained, I shall, as the subject of this forenoon's discourse, observe the following doctrine.

DOCT. 'A time of mortality is a special call to all rightly to number their days.'

Sin brought in mortality into the world, Gen. 2:17 compare chap. 5. And it has never gone out of it since; at all times some are here and there stepping off: but there are some times by way of eminency to be called 'times of mortality,' as that in the wilderness, and as now amongst us in this land. This has a special call.

Here I shall shew,

I. What it is to number our days.

II. That a time of mortality is a special call to this work.

I. I am to shew what it is to number our days. It imports,

1. Our days had a beginning, and we must reflect on that, Psal. 22:9. Every thing that is numbered must have a beginning; and therefore God's duration is not liable to numbering. But we may soon perceive our beginning to be in the world; and thence learn and observe,

(1.) That it is by divine appointment, and not by necessity of our nature, that we continue to be. The latter is proper to God only; by the former, angels and men, and all creatures, are continued in being. For he that once had no being, can never claim a natural necessity of continuing to be.

(2.) That every moment of our life hangs on the divine will and pleasure, Rev. 4 ult. There is no necessary connection betwixt your living this moment and living the next. The only bond betwixt them is God's word of appointment, Heb. 1:3. Loose that, and remove it, our life goes, and our eyes shall never see the next moment. No food, no physic, can prevent it, Matth. 4:4. There is no outliving that word, Psal. 90:3. 'Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men,' so much as for one moment.

(3.) That we must go the way of all flesh; for many of those we found in the world at our coming into it, are now gone, Zech. 1:5. This world is always like a fair near the height, where some are coming in, others going out, and those within in confusion, Eccl. 1:4. I doubt not but there may be some in this house this day, who, if they will consider, shall not find one of all those that filled it at their first coming into it. But these are gone, and others have come into the room of them all. And shall not others reckon so of us in a little time?

2. Our days will have an end, and we must seriously consider that. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. 39:4. 'Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is.' Every thing that is numerable has an end; and therefore eternity cannot be numbered, since it hath no end. But we may soon come to the end of our count, when we are counting our days; and thence may learn and observe,

(1.) That the shored tree will be cut down at length. 'I know that thou wilt bring me to death,' says Job, 'and to the house appointed for all living,' Job 30:23. When we were first planted in this world, the axe was laid down at the root of the tree, and we have grown up beside it. There is never a pain nor stitch, but it is a stroke of that axe, a pledge of a greater. Sometimes it has almost struck through, but in a little time it will go through altogether. So that man shall lie down, and not rise till the heavens be no more.

(2.) We will need nothing for this life ere long. Dip not so deep in the cares of this world as most do, to the ruin of their souls. Many have

been anxious to provide for the day which they never saw, as the rich man in the parable did, Luke 12:17–20. The clods of earth will serve for back and belly ere long, and we will have no portion in what is done under the sun; others will possess the houses, land, &c. which we now occupy.

(3.) See now how ye will begin eternity. It will begin with us when our days are come to an end; and as we begin it, so we will continue in it, Heb. 9:27. Our state now is alterable, but then it is unalterable for ever. Therefore now or never let us secure a happy eternity. Learn your duty from the unjust steward, the serious consideration of which I recommend to you, Luke 14:3–8.

(4.) Working time for eternity will not last. It closeth with the end of our days: Therefore 'whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest,' Eccl. 9:10.

Use. Be not idle spectators of the dispensation of this day. Number your days, so as ye may apply your hearts unto wisdom. If you will not take warning to prepare for eternity, by the removal of others, take heed lest God make you a warning to others. Let the aged and young hear the voice of the rod, and seriously improve it.

3. Our days are few, and we must consider, that they are the number of a man, they may be counted. There are some things not innumerable in themselves, yet cannot be numbered for their multitude. But there is no such multitude of the days of our life.

(1.) Consider the counters the scripture affords us to count our days by. A web, Isa. 38; it is such a web as one is still working at without intermission, and therefore will soon be cut out:—grass, and a flower soon withered, Isa. 40:6, 7;—green at morn, and cut down at night, Psal. 90:6:—a vapour that vanisheth away, frail, uncertain, and of short continuance, Jam. 4:14—smoke, Psal. 102:3:—a wind, a blast, or puff, Job 7:7:—a sleep, Psal. 90:5:—a dream, Job 20:8:—a hand-

breadth, Psal. 39:5:—nothing, *ibid.* compare Eccl. 3:2. Count with these counters, and the reckoning will be very small, which the scripture also has cast up to our hands.

(2.) Consider the scripture-reckoning of man's life. The highest reckoning is by years, now brought down to a few scores, Psal. 90:10. Nay, as we count the age of infants by months, so is man's age reckoned, Job 19:5. As if months were too big a word, it is brought down to days, and a few days, Job 14:1; yea, to one day, wherein there is but a morning, noon, and evening, Job 14:6; and yet lower, to an hour, 1 John 2:18; aye, to a moment, that is past ere one is aware, 2 Cor. 5:17. Prov. 12:19. So the sum of our days is very small.

From both ye may find that our days are few; and thence learn and observe,

(1.) It is no safe counting to count many years to come, whatever ye be, lest ye be out in your account, as the rich man was, Luke 12:19, 20. Many whose youth and strength seemed to give them ground for counting so, have been forced to see their mistake, and count again, little to their comfort, death coming ere it was looked for.

(2.) Our days will soon be at an end. We will quickly be over our hand-breadth. They fly like a shadow, Job 14:2. And though a weaver's shuttle is very swift, in going from one side of the web to the other, our days are swifter than it is, Job 7:6. See what Job says, chap. 9:25, 26. 'Now my days are swifter than a post; they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships; as the eagle that hasteth to the prey.'

(3.) We have no time to be idle. Our work for eternity is great, for it is long, and our time is short. They who have much work, little time to do it in, little strength to do it with, and much opposition to wrestle against, had need to lose no time, John 9:4. The shadows of the evening are stretched out; we have made but little way; let us therefore mend our pace.

(4.) Lastly, We must make the considering of our days, a serious business. The counting of them to purpose will not do otherwise. It deserves it, for eternity lies upon it; a mistake in that may be fatal; and we are very ready to miscount our days. And,

[1.] Make it a work by itself. If one have but a few threads to count, they will let other work alone till that be done; for it is of that nature that it will not mix with other pieces of work. Surely at any time, and much more at this time, God calls us to take some particular time for this work, Hag. 1:5.

[2.] Hold to it, till you have done it to purpose. Counting is not a work to be done by fits and starts. If it be broken off, readily all that is counted is lost, and one must just begin again, having lost his count. Fleeting thoughts of the shortness and uncertainty of time are to little purpose. The impression they make is soon worn off.

[3.] Dip into the business, and be not overly in it. One thing that is counting will be loath to hear or answer a word spoken to him, lest he miss his count. Satan and our ill hearts are apt to cast in diversions to those employed in counting their days; and by that means many times mar the work. But ye must stop your ears, and mind your business.

II. I proceed to shew, that a time of mortality is a special call to this work.

1. It sets death and eternity in a particular manner before the eyes of mortals, as appears from this psalm wherein our text lies. It is a looking-glass wherein every one may see his own frailty; for the strength of the hale is no more the strength of stones, nor their bones brass, more than others whom death has cut down. What is the lot of one mortal to-day, may be the lot of another to-morrow; and that calls to consider it.

2. God, by laying his hand on some, speaks unto others, as appears from what our Lord says, Luke 13:1 and downwards, and warns

them. And they that are wise will take warning, Micah 6:9. And it is a sad evidence when people will not hear it. They look like those marked for destruction, who, in the face of God's judgments going abroad in a place still do wickedly, Isa. 26:11.

3. It is an evidence of the Lord's anger against a land or country-side where it prevails, Amos 3:8. And not laying it to heart is a contempt of God, that he will surely avenge, Psal. 28:5. It speaks God to be risen up from his place to punish; and who knows who may fall ere God's sword, once drawn, be returned into its sheath?

Use. Let old and young comply with the call of God by the present sickness and mortality: let every one be stirred up thereby so to count their days, as they may apply their hearts unto wisdom. For motives, consider,

1. We will be most inexcusable, if after all these warnings death find us unprovided. The dispensation of the day is such, that no body needs to pretend to be surprised with death's coming to their own door, since it is carrying off so many, both young and old.

2. It is a piece of that duty we owe to an angry God, as we would not inflame his anger more against us, Psal. 28:5. Amos 3:8. It is not true courage, but stupidity and obstinacy, not to be deeply affected with the hand of God gone out against us. Let creatures despise, if they will, the stroke of their fellow worms, but let them not despise the stroke of God, Heb. 12:5. It becomes saints of the highest pitch to fear God smiting, Luke 12:4, 5.

3. This would be the way to get the stroke removed, or at least to get it sanctified, Hab. 3:16. The design of Providence in the stroke is to stir us up to this duty, and the answering of the call of the rod bids fairest for the removal of it, Lev. 26:41, 42. If not, the venom will be taken out of it; and if one be taken away being fitted for it, he will exchange this life for a better.

4. Lastly, If this be misimproved, it lays us open to a worse, Amos 4:11, 12. In a land so full of sin, so often threatened with desolating strokes, and so often delivered, but nothing bettered by deliverances, this stroke looks rather like the beginning than the end of sorrows, rather like an earnest than the round sum, that might clear the accounts betwixt God and a sinful nation.

THE SERMON IN THE AFTERNOON

WE are again met this day to humble ourselves under the hand of God, gone out against the congregation and country-side, in great sickness and mortality, and to deprecate the Lord's anger. I know no such expedient in our case, nor any thing that will bid so fair for the removal of the stroke, as our coming up to the standard of proficiency in the lesson in our text, which falls now to be spoken of, and which I shall cast into this doctrine.

DOCT. 'The right and necessary improvement of a time of bodily sickness and mortality, is to become wise for our souls.'

The Lord is putting particular persons and families among us, yea, all of us, to the school of affliction, since the hand of God gone out against some concerns all; and it is necessary we learn our lesson aright, and become wise thereby.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew what is that wisdom we must learn thereby.

II. Condescend on some particulars of wisdom which such a time calls us to apply our hearts to.

I. I am to shew, what is that wisdom we are to learn by a time of bodily sickness and mortality. It is serious godliness, or true religion. When one becomes seriously godly, leaving the way of sin, and entering on the way of faith and holiness, then he has learned the lesson that God is teaching us this day, Job 28 ult. 'Unto man he

said, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding.' This is the only true wisdom; and they continue arrant fools who do not arrive at it, whatever other wisdom they be masters of. This is the wisdom taught at God's school of affliction, Heb. 12:10. The voice of the rod is, Be wise for your souls. That this is the true wisdom, appears in that,

1. It is practical wisdom, wisdom for regulating a man's life in the way to happiness, Hos. 14 ult. How many are there accounted wise, who betray their folly in quite shooting by the mark, in the way of life they chuse, Jer. 22:13–16. Surely that is wisdom which sets men in the true way to happiness, which is faith and holiness, Mark 16:16. Heb. 12:14. What avail carnal worldly wit, the profound speculations of natural men in the learned sciences, and the dry and sapless notions of religion in formal professors? All these are but laborious trifling, and making a noise, doing nothing, while they never make them better men, though more knowing.

2. It is wisdom for one's self, Prov. 9:12. There is a set of men, whose wisdom is noted to be for others, but not for themselves, resembled by boatmen, who ferry others over, but, during the whole time of their rowing, have their eyes fixed on the place whence they came, and, immediately after landing their passengers, return to where they set out. Such is the wisdom of all ungodly men: their wisdom may profit other men's souls or bodies; but, alas! it profits not themselves, 1 Cor. 9 ult. Matth. 6:19, 20. But this is the excellency of real godliness, that 'it giveth life to them that have it,' Eccl. 7:12. It casts the soul into the mould of truth, sanctifies the heart and life in conformity to the divine nature and will; and so perfects human nature, raising up a glorious fabric out of the ruins in which it was laid by the fall.

3. It is wisdom for one's latter end, Deut. 32:29. The fool in the gospel had wit enough to provide for many years' life. But here lay his folly, he had nothing provided for his latter end, for a dying hour, Luke 12:20. Many such fools are among us. It was one of the dying

expressions of a learned man of the last age (Grotius), Ah! vitam perdidit, operose nihil agendo.

4. It is wisdom for the better part, Luke 10:41, 42. The wisdom of the world is but for the baser part of man, the body; it makes him useful in business and civil conversation. But this reaches only the outworks, while in the mean time the soul's concerns lie by neglected. But this wisdom advanceth the life and interests of the soul, insures one's title to heaven, and sets him on the way to eternal happiness, Prov. 8:35.

5. Lastly, It is wisdom for the better world, Heb. 11:14, 16. Our projects for this world, as to ourselves, must die with ourselves, Psal 146:4 but they who are wise for that better world, by being religious indeed, will find their measures wisely laid in time, to take and have their effect happily in eternity, Rev. 14:13. What they now sow, they shall then joyfully reap.

III. I proceed to condescend on some particulars of wisdom which such a time calls us to apply our hearts to.

1. To inquire seriously into the causes of the Lord's controversy with us, Job 10:2. When God's hand is stretched out, it will be our wisdom to search wherefore it is so, Lam. 3:39. Surely there is a cause; he does not smite without good reason: and unless our eyes see it, our hearts cannot rue it.

God has a controversy with the congregation and country-side; it were good we could lay it to heart. Two things seem to have the main hand in it.

(1.) Abuse and misimprovement of spiritual mercies and privileges. Thus the Lord threatened the Old-Testament church, Deut. 28:58, 59. 'If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law, that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, The Lord Thy God; then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of

long continuance and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.' This brought a sore sickness upon the church of Corinth, 1 Cor. 11:30. The noted divisions, and deserting of ordinances, in the country, are the judgment and the sin of the corner, whereby contempt is poured on precious gospel-ordinances, the success of the gospel marred by so many hinderances laid in the way of souls getting good of it; and thus gnats are strained at, and camels swallowed down, in respect of the deep-dyed guilt in what it does to hinder the spiritual good of perishing souls. Men will not see it, but they shall see. And alas! how evident is our unfruitfulness under means of grace? How few are bettered now by a preached gospel? God's word is slighted, and ineffectual for our reformation, his holy name is profaned, his Sabbaths are violated, sacraments are neglected by some, and profaned by others with their unholy and untender lives. What wonder that for this cause 'many are weak and sickly among us, and many sleep?' 1 Cor. 11:30. Warnings and reproofs prevail not, conviction is rare, and conversion is more rare. Many have not a form of godliness left them; and few have any thing but a form of it. Many are crying out against the sins of others, while the visible blots in their own lives do not make them smite on their own breasts and say 'What have I done!' God grant that the contempt and abuse of gospel-privileges bring not a removal of the kingdom of God from us.

(2.) Abuse and misimprovement of temporal mercies. It is observable, that with the promise of plenty to the church, using their plenty in a holy becoming manner, the promise of the taking away of sickness is joined, Exod. 23:25. Deut. 7:12–14. This says that God punisheth abuse of plenty with sickness. God has given the country plenteous years; and what has been the issue of it, but contempt of God and the rules of righteousness, increase of pride and vanity, and drunkenness, with an unordinary abuse of that fiery liquor, never ordained for ordinary drinking; masters breaking the yoke, undermining and undergoing one another through the country; servants bursting all bonds, and turned quite unmanageable and undutiful? The last year, a little before this time, I gave warning from the Lord's word against these things particularly*: but I think there

was never more of them in my time, than followed upon the back of it. No wonder then, that God has shapen us out another piece of work this year.

Let these things be weighed in an even balance, as in the sight of God, by us all. And let particular persons and families, especially those who have been or are under the rod, inquire into the causes of God's quarrel with them, that they may see why the Lord contendeth.

2. To be humbled under the causes of the Lord's anger, and to turn to a smiting God in Christ. This would be our wisdom, Lev. 26:41, 42. Micah 6:9. It is not time to stand in the way of sinners, when God is risen up to plead; it is high time to fall down before him in humiliation, and to fall off from God-provoking courses by reformation. Hear the voice of the rod. It is crying two things loudly this day.

(1.) Improve a season of the gospel. Some sermons have of late been the last to them that heard them. Some heard the sermon on the Lord's day in health, that were in eternity ere the next Sabbath. This says, Hear ye every day as if it were to be your last.

(2.) Improve temporal mercies, lest God be provoked to take them from you. Health and strength, and other temporal conveniences, are to be wisely managed, for you see we have no tack of them, Eccl. 9:10.

3. To be upon your guard, and make sure for eternity, while you live. Remember the parable of the wise and foolish builder, and how apt ye are to play the fool in these matters, while health and strength last.

(1.) Beware ye be not cheated out of your most valuable interests, by a deceitful heart, a treacherous world, and a wily devil. Satan goes about many a poor simple one, till they are tricked of their souls, their part of Christ and heaven, and all the happiness of another world, Matth. 16:26. And wherefore do they part with them, but for

the gratifying of a lust, which is a practice more foolish than if one should part with an estate for a childish toy. So did Esau. Wherefore be wise in time.

(2.) Beware the best bargain slip not through your fingers, while ye are pursuing vanities, Prov. 17:16. Alas! there are not a few, who, being busied with vanities of this world, which pass away with the using, miss the opportunity of making the treasure hid in the field of the gospel their own. Therefore be wise.

(3.) Beware of feeding yourselves with dreams and fancies, where in there is no reality. There are many foolish virgins with lamps without oil, and foolish builders on the sand. There are many whose life is but one continued dream, wherein they judge aright of nothing, neither God, heaven, hell, nor the world. So that their awakening cannot be but terrible. But be ye wise.

4. To prepare timeously for death and judgment, Matth. 24:44. It is certain that naturally we are quite out of case for that great change: and, alas! we are naturally unwilling to think of it, or provide for it. But necessity has no law. We must die; and we must either be provided for death, or we are ruined: and if we be not timely provided, our candle may be put out ere our work be done.

(1.) Get habitual preparation for death, in a gracious state, Rom. 8:1. Be sure to get out of the state of nature into the state of grace. And then come death when it will, it will but transport you into the state of glory. And there are two things here to be secured.

[1.] Get your title to heaven fixed. None will get thither but those who have a right to it, Mat. 25:34. 2 Cor. 5:1. To others the door will be cast in their face. But, ye may say, how may we get a title to heaven? Ans. Marry the Heir, and heaven will be your dowry. The everlasting covenant is offerd to you in the gospel, God to be your God in Christ, and Christ to be yours in all his offices. Therefore make a solemn

deliberate transaction with God this night, embracing Christ in the covenant, and consenting to it, with an eye to death and eternity.

[2.] Get a fitness for heaven wrought in you, Col. 1:12. For ye cannot be meet for it, till your nature be changed. How may we get that fitness? may ye say. Ans, Believe and embrace Jesus Christ, for his spirit of sanctification, 1 Cor. 1:30. There is a fulness of the Spirit in him to be communicated, and faith must eye Christ for his sanctifying Spirit. Put off the old man, and put on the new man: be new creatures, and let old things pass away, and all things become new. In vain do men pretend to faith without this, 2 Cor. 5:17 and in vain will men look for heaven without it, John 3:3.

This is habitual preparation, which whoso have, if they should be struck dead in a moment, or immediately seized with diliriousness, and die raving, yet they are safe; 'for there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,' Rom. 8:1.

(2.) Get actual preparation for death, in a gracious frame for dying, that ye may die comfortably.

[1.] Make speed with the work given you to do. Whatever piece of work is put into your hand, for God's honour, dispatch it with all expedition, Matth. 24:46 for if ye delay it, ye may lose the opportunity for ever.

[2.] Be habitually tender in your life, Acts 24:16. And beware of any standing controversy betwixt God and you: for if there be any such, it will readily stare you in a dying hour.

[3.] Be weaned from the world, and hold a loose grip of all you have in it, that it might drop like Joseph's mantle.

(4.) Keep waking and watchful, Luke 12:36. Be much in the thoughts of death, and the life to come, that ye be not surprised*.

[5.] Lastly, To prepare for more public and general trials and calamities. This is a piece of wisdom to be learned from such a dispensation. For lesser strokes are usually the forerunners of greater ones. Sodom and Gomorrah were tried with a lesser stroke, ere they were destroyed by fire from heaven, Gen. 14:10. And our Lord told the Jews, that unless they repented, they should perish, Luke 13:5; which threatening was accomplished in the destruction of Jerusalem. The day may yet come, wherein men shall praise the dead, that are already dead; and they may miss this stroke, who are reserved for a worse, and shall meet with it ere all be done. In a time when the cup of God's anger is going through a land, they that drink first usually fare best. How are we to prepare? may ye say. Ans. Keep your garments clean from the sins and snares of the day, and place where ye live, and take up your lodging in the sure and unalterable covenant of grace, and then no evil shall befall you.

TWO FORMS OF PERSONAL COVENANTING BY THE AUTHOR

[As Mr. Boston, has in his writings accurately explained the nature, and warmly inculcated the duty and necessity, of personal covenanting, or explicit entering into, or renewing covenant with God, by taking hold of God's covenant of grace; it will not be improper to subjoin the two following specimens of that solemn transaction in his own practice: the first, dated August 14, 1699, a little before his ordination to the ministry; the other, dated December 2, 1729, about two years and five months before his death. Both are printed from the original copies.]

A FIRST PERSONAL COVENANT

I, MR. THOMAS BOSTON, preacher of the gospel of Christ, being by nature an apostate from God, an enemy to the great JEHOVAH, and

so an heir of hell and wrath, in myself utterly lost and undone, because of my original and actual sins, and misery thereby; and being, in some measure, made sensible of this my lost and undone state, and sensible of my need, my absolute need of a Saviour, without whom I must perish eternally; and believing that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the eternal God, is not only able to save me, by virtue of his death and sufferings, but willing also to save me (though most vile and ugly, and one who has given him many repulses), both from my sins, and from the load of wrath due to me for them, upon condition that I believe, come to him for salvation, and cordially receive him in all his offices; consenting to the terms of the covenant: therefore, as I have at several opportunities before given an express and solemn consent to the terms of the covenant, and have entered into a personal covenant with Christ; so now, being called to undertake the great and weighty work of the ministry of the gospel, for which I am altogether insufficient, I do by this declare, That I stand to and own all my former engagements, whether sacramental, or any other way whatsoever; and now again do RENEW my covenant with God; and hereby, at this present time, do solemnly COVENANT and ENGAGE to be the Lord's and MAKE a solemn resignation and upgiving of myself, my soul, body, spiritual and temporal concerns, unto the Lord Jesus Christ, without any reservation whatsoever; and do hereby give my voluntary consent to the terms of the covenant laid down in the holy scriptures, the word of truth; and with my heart and soul I TAKE and RECEIVE Christ in all his offices, as my PROPHET to teach me, resolving and engaging in his strength to follow, that is, to endeavour to follow his instructions: I TAKE him as my PRIEST, to be saved by his death and merits alone; and renouncing my own righteousness as filthy rags and menstruous cloths, I am content to be clothed with his righteousness alone; and live entirely upon free grace; likewise I TAKE him for my ADVOCATE and INTERCESSOR with the Father: and finally, I TAKE him as my KING, to reign in me, and to rule over me, renouncing all other lords, whether sin or self, and in particular my predominant idol; and in the strength of the Lord, do resolve and hereby engage, to cleave to Christ as my Sovereign Lord and King, in

death and in life, in prosperity and in adversity, even for ever, and to strive and wrestle in his strength against all known sin; protesting, that whatever sin may be lying hid in my heart out of my view, I disown it, and abhor it, and shall in the Lord's strength, endeavour the mortification of it, when the Lord shall be pleased to let me see it. And this solemn covenant I make as in the presence of the ever-living, heart-searching God, and subscribe it with my hand, in my chamber, at Dunse, about one o'clock in the afternoon, the fourteenth day of August, one thousand six hundred and ninety-nine years.

T. BOSTON.

A SECOND PERSONAL COVENANT

O LORD, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I confess from my heart, that I am by nature a lost and undone sinner, wholly corrupted, and laid under the curse, in Adam, through the breach of the covenant of works; and have ruined myself more and more by my innumerable actual transactions, whereby my whole life appears in mine eyes this day a heap of vanity, sin, and foolishness. I am fully convinced, and do from my heart acknowledge, that I am utterly unable to help myself, in whole or in part, out of this gulf of sin and misery, into which I am plunged; and that it is beyond the reach of the whole creation to help me out of it; so that I must inevitably perish for ever, if thine own strong hand do not make help to me. But forasmuch as there is a covenant of grace, for life and salvation to lost sinners, established between THEE and thine own SON, the Lord Jesus Christ, as second Adam; wherein, upon condition of his fulfilling all righteousness, which is now performed, in his having been born perfectly holy, lived altogether righteously, and made perfect satisfaction to justice by his death and sufferings, thou hast promised that thou wilt be their God, and they shall be thy people, to the making of them holy and happy for ever; and that this covenant is, in Christ the head thereof, offered and exhibited to me in thy gospel, and thou callest me into the fellowship thereof, in him:

Therefore (adhering to my former acceptings, and taking hold of it, declared whether by word or writ before thee, without wilful mistaking of it, or known guile), upon the warrant of, and in obedience to, thy command and call, I, in myself a poor perishing sinner, and worthy to perish, do now again TAKE HOLD of that COVENANT, for life and salvation to ME; believing on the name of Christ crucified the head thereof, offered and exhibited to me, as the great High Priest, who, by the sacrifice of himself, hath made atonement, paid the ransom, and brought in everlasting righteousness for poor sinners. I CREDIT his word of grace to me, and accordingly TRUST on him, that he with his righteousness will be mine, and that, in and through him, God will be my God, and I shall be one of his people, to the making of me holy and happy for ever. O my God, I do by thy grace acquiesce in that covenant, as all my salvation, and all my desire. With my whole heart and soul, the Son incarnate is my only PRIEST, my surety, my Intercessor, and my Redeemer; and, in him, the FATHER my FATHER, the HOLY GHOST my SANCTIFIER; GOD in CHRIST my God. I resign my self, soul and body, to him, to be saved by his blood alone; renouncing all confidence in mine own righteousness, doings, and sufferings. With my whole heart and soul he is my HEAD and HUSBAND: and I am his only, wholly, and for ever; to live by him, to him, and for him. I take him for my alone PROPHET, Oracle, and Guide; give up myself wholly to him, to be taught, guided, and directed, in all things, by his word and Spirit; and renounce mine own wisdom, and the wisdom of this world. He is, with my heart's content, my alone KING and Lord. And I resign myself wholly, soul and body, unto him, to be rescued, by the strength of his mighty hand, from sin, death, the devil, and this present evil world, for to serve him for ever, and to be ruled by the will of his command as my duty, and the will of his providence as to my lot. I am, with my whole heart, content (Lord, thou knowest) to part with, and do renounce, every known sin, lust, or idol, and particularly that sin which most easily besets me; together with my own foolish will, and other lords besides him; without reservation, and without exception against his cross: Protesting in thy sight, O Lord, that I am, through grace, willing to have discovered unto me,

and upon discovery to part with, every sin in me that I know not: and that the doubtings and averseness of heart, mixed with this my accepting of thy covenant, are what I allow not: and that, notwithstanding thereof, I look to be accepted of thee herein, in the Beloved, thine only Son and my Saviour, purging away these, with all my other sins, by his precious blood. Let it be recorded in heaven, O Lord, and let the bed on which I leaned, the timber, and the stones, and all other things about me here, in my closet, bear witness, That I, though most unworthy, have this second day of December, One thousand seven hundred and twenty-nine years, here taken hold of, and come into thy covenant of grace, offered and exhibited to me in thy gospel, for time and eternity; and that thou art my God in the tenor of that covenant, and I am one of thy people, from henceforth and for ever.

T. BOSTON.

MONERGISM BOOKS

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