

Ann Mason

THE
CHRISTIAN'S GREAT INTEREST.

IN TWO PARTS.

PART I.

THE TRIAL OF A SAVING INTEREST IN CHRIST.

PART II.

THE WAY HOW TO ATTAIN IT.

BY THE REVEREND WILLIAM GUTHRIE,

LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT FINWICK.

Wherefore the rather, Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.....2. PETER i. 10.

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. xiii. 5.

I am my Beloved's, and my beloved is mine.....SONG vi. 3.

SALEM (N. Y.)

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1. Salvation

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P R E F A C E.

READER,

MY design in detaining you with a preface, is not merely a recommendation of the following work; its character has been described by pens more capable than mine, and its real value asserted by names much more entitled to your confidence and respect. During the period of one hundred and fifty years the religious world have assigned it nearly the first rank among books of human composition, and its seal is impressed on the hearts of multitudes both sinners and saints; to the former it has been effectual, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, for their conversion, to the latter for their greater establishment and consolation.

My design in addressing you is only to expostulate with you thankfully to receive and diligently to improve it. We learn from the sacred oracles that some *have a form of godliness*, who are, notwithstanding, destitute of its *living power*; that many will approach the Saviour at last and knock, saying, *Lord, Lord, open to us; we have eat and drunk in thy presence and thou hast taught in our streets*; to whom he will reply, *I know you not whence you are: depart from me all ye workers of iniquity*. In the following treatise thou mayest learn to which class of professors thou belongest now, and in which thy doom may be expected at last. Here thy fears, thy joys, thy desires, thy hopes are laid in the unerring balance of the sanctuary and impartially weighed. This little volume, by a plain exhibition of divine truth to the understanding and by a powerful application of it to the heart, is eminently calculated to convince the careless of their danger, to instruct in the true method of salvation the ignorant and erroneous; to strip the vain formalist of his self-deceiving mask; to answer the objections and allay the fears of the weak and the timid, to brighten the evidences of the doubting, and cheer with

the light of heaven the spiritual pilgrim, while he is travelling to his Father's house. Reader, peruse it with all possible attention and impartially compare thine exercises with that divine standard which it presents, because on *this Trial of a Saving Interest in Christ* thy soul is eternally concerned. If like *the foolish virgins*, thou hast *only the lamp* of a profession, better to discover the mistake now while oil is flowing from Jesus the Living Head, than hereafter, when all communication shall be suspended and *he that is unjust shall be unjust still*; if when *weighed in the balance thou art found wanting*, better to know it in time while the offers of reconciliation are repeated, than hereafter when the door of mercy shall be finally closed and the Lord God *shall swear in his wrath that thou shalt not enter into his rest*.

Again, after the examination of thine estate has been impartially made, if thou art left without any comfortable assurance of an *Interest in Christ*, this treatise directs thee how to attain it; how to *make thy calling and election sure*, by embracing Jesus with his eternal redemption as tendered freely in the gospel; a balm is here exhibited for thy diseases however complicated; an open door is held forth to view by which thou mayest enter *the city of refuge* and be eternally secured, *from the avenger of blood*; Jesus the friend of sinners; Jesus "whose sacrifice is the soul's ransom, whose righteousness is the soul's raiment," whose consolations are the soul's life and support is clearly exhibited and indiscriminately offered to every reader. The fountain of life is unsealed and its healing waters drawn forth and tendered to any person that is spiritually athirst.

A few christian friends in this and other places have united their contributions to publish and circulate thro' your settlements this precious treat. Receive it, brethren, as an unfeigned testimony of our sympathy with you in your desolate situation and our fervent concern for your eternal welfare. The present may, possibly, be the last service of this nature which some of us shall ever have opportunity of rendering you, thi' consider-

ation encreases our solicitude that the offering may not be coldly received or carelessly improved. Although we are remote from many of you in local situation, we esteem you our brethren by nature; we would long over you *in the bowels of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and cheerfully *spend and be spent* that your souls might be saved in the terrible day of his coming. Should this mean of salvation which, through *the good hand of our God helping*, we are enabled to carry to your abodes be blessed for awakening any thoughtless reader or encouraging any weak and wavering reader, we shall consider ourselves rewarded ten thousand fold; we shall consider ourselves unspeakably honoured in being employed as instruments of bringing glory to Jesus and furtherance to *your spiritual joy*. But on the other hand, should it lay in your habitations despised or neglected, our souls must weep for you *in secret places*. We know that by sounding the alarm we become guiltless of your blood *whether you hear or forbear*, but we are not satisfied barely with escaping ourselves; we would willingly be instrumental in rescuing you from destruction and behold you at last standing *before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*. With these assurances of affection to your souls and solicitude for their eternal salvation we conclude *praying you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God*.

Now, that our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God even our Father which hath loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, may comfort your hearts and stablish you in every good word and work is, in the name of these your spiritual benefactors, the prayer of your unworthy servant,

ALEXANDER PROUDFIT.

SALEM, January 23, 1805.

INTRODUCTION.

SINCE there be so many people living under the ordinances, pretending, without ground, to a special interest in Christ, and to his favor and salvation, as is clear, "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." "Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." And since many, who have good ground of claim to Christ are not established in the confidence of his favour, but remain in the dark, without comfort, hesitating concerning the reality of godliness in themselves, and speaking little to the commendation of religion to others, especially in the time of their straits, I shall speak a little to two things of the greatest concernment: The one is, How a person shall know if he hath a true and special interest in Christ, and whether he doth lay just claim to God's favour and salvation? The other is, In case a person fall short in the foresaid trial, what course he shall take for making sure God's friendship and salvation to himself?

THE
TRIAL OF A SAVING INTEREST IN CHRIST.

PART I.

QUESTION....*How shall a Man know if he hath a true and special Interest in CHRIST, and whether he hath, or may lay claim justly to, God's favor and salvation?*

Chapter I.

A MAN'S INTEREST IN CHRIST MAY BE KNOWN.

SECTION I.

It is a matter of the highest importance, and is to be determined by Scripture.

BEFORE we speak directly to the question, we shall premise some things, to make way for the answer.

First, That a man's interest in Christ, or his gracious state, may be known, and that with more certainty than people do conjecture; yea, and the knowledge of it may be more easily attained unto than many do imagine:—for not only hath the Lord commanded men to know their interest in him, as a thing attainable, “Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith,” “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure;” but many of the saints have attained unto the clear persuasion of their interest in Christ, and in God as their own God. How often do they call him their *God* and their *portion*? and how persuaded is Paul “that nothing can separate him from the love of God?” Therefore the knowledge of a man's gracious state is attainable.

And this knowledge of it, which may be attained, is no fancy and bare conceit, but it is most sure; "Doubtless thou art our Father," saith the prophet, in the name of the church. It is clear thus: (1.) That can be no fancy, but a very sure knowledge, which doth yield to a rational man comfort in most real straits: but so doth this; "When the people spake of stoning David, he encouraged himself in the Lord his God." He saith there, "he will not be afraid of ten thousands that rise against him." Compare these words with that psalm, "But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me: my glory, and the lifter up of mine head." "The Lord is my light, and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." (2.) That is a sure knowledge of a thing which maketh a wise merchant sell all he hath that he may keep it sure; that maketh a man forego children, lands, life, and suffer the spoiling of all joyfully: but so doth this. (3.) That must be a sure and certain knowledge, and no fancy, whereupon a man voluntarily and freely doth adventure his soul when he is stepping into eternity, with this word in his mouth, "This is all my desire:" but such a knowledge is this.

And again, not only may a godly man come to the sure knowledge of his gracious state, but it is more easily attainable than many do apprehend: for supposing, what shall be afterwards proved, that a man may know the gracious work of God's Spirit in himself; if he will but argue rationally from thence, he shall be forced to conclude his interest in Christ, unless he deny clear Scripture truths. I shall only make use of one here, because we are to speak more directly to this afterwards. A godly man may argue thus, Whosoever receiveth Christ are justly reputed the children of God, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God;" but I have received Christ all the ways which the word there can import; for I please the de-

vice of salvation by Christ ; I agree to the terms ; I welcome the offer of Christ in all his offices, as a King to rule over me, a Priest to offer and intercede for me, a Prophet to teach me ; I lay out my heart for him and towards him, resting on him as I am able. What else can be meant by the word RECEIVING ? Therefore may I say, and conclude plainly and warrantably, I am justly to reckon myself God's child according to the afore-said Scripture, which cannot fail.

The *Second* thing to be premised is, That a man be savingly in covenant with God is a matter of the highest importance ; “ It is his life ;” and yet very few have or seek after a saving interest in the covenant, and many foolishly think they have such a thing without any solid ground : “ Few find, or walk, in the narrow way.”— This should alarm people to be serious about the matter, since it is of so great consequence to be in Christ, and since there be but few that may lay just claim to him ; and yet many do foolishly fancy an interest in him, who are deceived by a false confidence, as the *foolish virgins* do.

The *Third* thing to be premised is, Men must resolve to be determined by Scripture in this matter of their interest in Christ. The Spirit speaking in the Scripture is judge of all controversies : “ To the law and to the testimony ; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them ;” and of this also, whether a man be savingly in covenant with God or not.— Therefore do not mock God whilst you seem to search after such a thing. If we prove from Scripture, which is the uncontroverted rule, that you are gracious, and have stricken covenant savingly with God, then resolve to grant so much, and to acquiesce in it : and if the contrary appear, let there be a determination of the controversy, else you do but *mock* the Lord, and so “ your bands shall be made strong ;” for “ a jot of his word cannot fail.” Therefore seek *eye-salve* from Christ to judge of things according as the word of God shall discover them to be.

SECTION II.

Reasons why so few come to the clear knowledge of their Interest in CHRIST.

THE *Fourth* thing to be premised is, Although the matter of a man's interest in Christ be of so great importance, and the way to attain to the knowledge of it so plainly held forth in the Scriptures, yet there be but few who reach the distinct knowledge of it. And that this may not discourage any person from attempting it, I shall hint some few reasons why so few come to the clear knowledge of it ; which will also prepare the way for what is to be spoken afterwards.

The *first* thing which doth hinder many from the knowledge of their interest in Christ, is their ignorance of some special principles of religion : as (1.) That it was free love in God's bosom, and nothing in man, that moved him to send a Saviour to perfect the work of redemption, " God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." Men are still seeking some ground for that business in themselves, which leads away from suitable and high apprehensions of the first spring and rise of God's covenant-favor to his people, which hath no reason, cause, or motive in us ; and so they cannot come to the knowledge of their interest.

(2.) They are ignorant how that love doth effectually discover itself to a man's heart, so as he hath ground to lay claim to it, *viz.* That ordinarily it doth, *1st*, discover his broken state in himself, because of sin and corruption defiling the whole man, and any thing in him that might be called a righteousness ; " All these things are loss and dung." *2dly*, It discovereth Christ as the full and satisfying treasure above all things ; " The man finds a treasure, for which with joy he selleth all."—*3dly*, It determineth the heart, and causeth it to approach unto a living God in the ordinances : " Blessed is the man whom thou chusest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts," and causeth

the heart to wait upon him, and him alone; "My soul, wait thou only upon God." Thus having dropped in the seed of God in the heart, and *formed Christ* there, the *heart* is changed and made *new* in the foresaid work, and God's law is so stamped upon the heart in that change, that the whole yoke of Christ is commended to the man without exception; *the law* is acknowledged *good, holy, just, and spiritual*. Upon all which, from that new principle of life, there flow out acts of a new life, "faith worketh by love;" and the man becometh "a servant of righteousness unto God," which doth especially appear in the spirituality of worship; men then "serve God in spirit and truth; and in the newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter;" and tenderness in all manner of conversation; the man then "exerciseth himself how to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men." Now this way doth the love of God discover itself unto man, and acteth on him, so as he hath ground of laying some good claim to it; so as he may justly think that the love which sent a Saviour had respect to such a man as hath found these things made out unto him. Surely ignorance in this doth hinder many from the knowledge of their interest in Christ; for if a man know not how God worketh with a person, so as he may justly lay claim to his love, which was from eternity, he will wander in the dark, and not come to the knowledge of an interest in him.

(3.) Many are also ignorant of this, that God alone is the hope of his people: he is called *the Hope of Israel*; although inherent qualifications are evidences of it, yet the staying of the heart upon him as a full blessing and satisfying portion is faith; "the faith and hope must be in God;" and the only proper condition which giveth right to the saving blessings of the covenant;—"to him that worketh not, but believeth—faith is counted for righteousness." Indeed, if any person take liberty here, and turn grace into wantonness, there is without doubt in so far a delusion; since there "is mercy with him, upon condition that it conciliate fear to

him :” Yea, hardly can any man, who hath found the foreſaid expreſſions of God’s love made out upon him, make a cloak of the covenant for ſinful liberty without ſome meaſure of a ſpiritual conflict ; in this reſpect, “ he that is born of God doth not ſin ;” and, “ he who doth ſo ſin hath not ſeen God ;” I ſay, God is the hope of his people, and not their own holineſs. If they intend honeſty, and long ſeriously to be like unto him, many failings ſhould not weaken their hope and confidence, for it is in him “ who changeth not ;” “ and if any man ſinneth, he hath an advocate.” Now, when men place their hope in any other thing beſide the Lord, it is no wonder they be kept in a ſtaggering condition, according to the changes of the thing which they make the ground of their hope, ſince they give not to God the glory due to his name, and which he will not give to another.—“ They who know thy name will put their truſt in thee,” “ My glory will I not give to another : I am the Lord, that is my name.”

(4.) Many are ignorant of the different ways and degrees of God’s working with his people, and this doth much darken their knowledge, and reflex acts of their intereſt in him. This ignorance doth run mainly on three heads. (1.) They are ignorant of the different degrees and ways of that law-work which ordinarily dealeth with men, and of the different ways how the Lord bringeth home people at firſt to Chriſt. They conſider not that the Jailor is not kept an hour in bondage ; Paul is kept in ſuſpenſe three days, Zaccheus not one moment.— (2.) They are ignorant of, at leaſt they do not conſider, how different the degrees of ſanctification are in the ſaints, and the honorable appearings thereof before men in ſome ; and the ſad blemiſhings thereof in others. Some are very blameleſs, and more free of groſs out-breakings, adorning their profeſſion much, as Job, *chap. i.* and Zacharias, *Luke i.* Theſe are ſaid to be “ perfect and upright, fearing God, and eſchewing evil ; righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameleſs :” others were ſubject to

very gross and sad evils, as Solomon, Afa, &c. (3.) They are ignorant of the different communications of God's face, and expressions of his presence. Some do walk much in the light of God's countenance, and are much in sensible fellowship with him, as David was; others are "all their days kept in bondage through fear of death." Surely the ignorance of the different ways of God's working and dealing with his people doth very much darken the knowledge of their interest in him, whilst they usually stint the Lord to one way of working, which he doth not keep, as we have shewed in the former examples.

The *second* thing which doth darken men about their interest in Christ is, there is one thing or other wherein their heart in some respect doth condemn them, as dealing deceitfully and guilefully with God. It is not to be expected that these can come to clearness about their interest whose heart doth condemn them for keeping up some known transgression against the Lord, which they will not let go, neither are using the means which they know to be appointed by God for delivering them from it: neither can these come to clearness who know some positive duty commanded them in their stations, which they deceitfully shift and shun, not closing cheerfully with it, or not willing to be led into it: these are also, in some respect, condemned of their own heart, as the former sort; and in that case it is difficult to come to a distinct knowledge of their state. "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." It is supposed there, that a self-condemning heart maketh void a man's confidence proportionally before God.

I do not deny but that men may on good grounds plead an interest in Christ in the case of prevailing iniquity. "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions thou shalt purge them away." "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. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then,

with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." But it is hard to be attained, if at all attainable, when the heart is dealing deceitfully, and entertaining known guile in a particular: therefore let people clear themselves of the particular which they know too well. It is the thing which doth meet them, marring their confidence and access in all their approaches unto God; see *Judg.* x. 10, 13—the idolatries of the people are cast up to them by the Lord, and their suit rejected thereupon. That which draweth away the heart first in the morning, and last at night, like "an oven heated at night, and it burneth as a flaming fire in the morning," spoken of the wicked, and taketh up their thoughts often on their bed; as it is said of some, "He deviseth mischief upon his bed," &c. That which doth lead away the heart in time of religious duty ordinarily, and the remembrance of which hath power to enliven and quicken the spirits more than the remembrance of God, so as "their heart is after the heart of some detestable thing;" that which withstandeth men when they would gripe the promise, as God casteth up men's sins to them who are meddling with his covenant; "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?" that is the thing which doth mar the knowledge of a gracious state; let it go, and it will be more easy to reach the knowledge of an interest in Christ.

The *third* thing which hindereth the knowledge of an interest in Christ is, a spirit of sloth and careless negligence in many. They complain that they know not whether they be in Christ or not: but as few take pains to be in him, so few take pains to try if they be in him. It is a work and business which cannot be done sleeping, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves." The several words used there, viz. *Examine, prove, know,*—say that there is a labour in it; "diligence must be used to make our calling and election sure." It is a business above flesh and blood; the "holy anointing

which teacheth all things," must make us "know the things freely given us of God." Shall the Lord impart a business of so great concernment, and not so much as "be inquired after to do it for men?" Be ashamed, you who spend so much time in reading of romances, in adorning your persons, in hawking and hunting, in consulting the law concerning your outward state in the world, and it may be in worse things than these; be ashamed that you spend so little time in the search of this, whether ye be an heir of glory or not? Whether you be in the way that leadeth to heaven, or that way which will land you in darkness for ever? You who judge this below you, and unworthy of your pains any part or minute of your time, it is like, in God's account, you have judged yourselves *unworthy of everlasting life*, so as you shall have no lot with God's people in this matter.

The *fourth* thing that doth darken the knowledge of an interest in Christ is, Men do not condescend upon what would satisfy them. They complain that God will not shew unto them what he is about to do with them, but cannot yet say they know what would satisfy concerning his purpose. This is a sad thing. Shall we think these are serious who have never as yet pitched on what would satisfy them, nor are making earnest inquiry after what should satisfy? If the Lord had left us in the dark in that matter, we were less inexcusable; but since the grounds of satisfaction, and the true marks of an interest in Christ, are so clear and frequent in scripture, and so "many things written, that our joy may be full," and "that those who believe may know that they have eternal life," and since "he that believeth hath a witness of it in himself," none can pretend excuse here. We may not here insist to shew what may and should satisfy concerning our interest, since we are to speak directly to it afterwards.

The *fifth* thing that helpeth much to keep men in the dark concerning their interest in Christ is, they pitch upon some mutable grounds, which are not so apposite proofs of the truth of an interest in Christ as of the com-

fortable state of a triumphing soul failing before the wind; and marks, which I grant are precious in themselves, and do make out an interest clearly where they are: yet they are such as without which an interest in Christ may be, and be known also in a good measure. We shall touch a few of them.

1st, Some think that all who have a true interest in him are above the prevailing power of every sin: but this is contrary to that of "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions thou shalt purge them away:" where we find that holy man laying just claim to pardon, in the case of prevailing iniquity; and that where "Paul thanketh God through Christ, as freed from the condemnation of the law, even whilst a law in his members leadeth captive unto sin."

2^{dly}, Some think that all true saints have constantly access unto God in prayer, and sensible returns of prayer at all times; but this is contrary to the many sad exercises of his people, complaining often that they are not heard nor regarded of God, "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? For ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" "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."

3^{dly}, Some think that all who have any true interest in him have God witnessing the same unto them by a high operation of that *witnessing Spirit* of his, spoken of *Rom. viii. 16.* "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God;" whereof afterwards; and so they still suspect their own interest in Christ, because of the want of this. But they do not remember that they must first believe and give credit to that "record which God hath given of the Son, that there is life enough in him" for men, and then look for the seal and witness of the Spirit; "in whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise." As long as people hold fast these principles, and the like,

they can hardly come to the knowledge of their gracious state, which God hath warranted people to prove and clear up to themselves, otherways than by these foresaid things.

SECTION III.

Some mistakes concerning an Interest in Christ removed.

THE *fifth* thing to be premised is, the removal of some mistakes whereinto people may readily run themselves, when we are about to prove their interest in Christ.

As *1st*, It is a mistake to think that every one who is in Christ doth know that he is in him; for many are truly gracious, and have a good title to eternal life, who do not know so much, until it be made out afterwards: "These things are written to believers, that they may know they have a true title to eternal life;" that is, that they may know they are believers, and so it is supposed they knew it not before.

2dly, It is a mistake to think that all who come to the knowledge of their interest in Christ do attain an equal certainty about the same. One may say, "he is persuaded nothing present, or to come, can separate him from the love of God," another cometh but this length "I believe, help my unbelief."

3dly, It is a mistake to think that every one who attaineth a strong persuasion of his interest doth always hold there; for he who to-day may say of the Lord, "he is his refuge," and "his portion," will at another time say, "He is cut off," and will ask, "if the truth of God's promise doth fail for evermore?"

4tly, It is also a mistake to think that every one who doth attain a good knowledge of their gracious state can formally answer all objections made to the contrary; but yet they may hold fast the conclusion, and say, "I know whom I have believed." There be few grounds of the Christian religion, whereof many people are so persuaded, as that they are able to maintain them formally a-

gainst all arguments brought to the contrary ; and yet they may and will hold the conclusion stedfastly and justly ; so it is in this case in hand.

5thly, It is no less a mistake to imagine that the vain groundless confidence, which many profane ignorant Atheists do maintain, is this knowledge of an interest in Christ which we plead for. Many do falsely avow him "to be their Father," and many look for heaven who will be beguiled with these "foolish virgins," yet we must not think, because of this, that all knowledge of an interest is a delusion and fancy, although these fools be deceived ; for, whilst thousands are deluded, some can say on good and solid grounds, "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in wickedness."

Chapter II.

SECTION I.

The Ways by which the Lord draweth some to Christ, without a sensible preparatory Law-work.

HAVING premised these things, it now followeth that we give some marks by which a man may know if he be savingly in covenant with God, and hath a special interest in Christ, so as he may warrantably lay claim to God's favor and salvation. We shall only pitch upon two great and principal marks, not willing to trouble people with many.

But before we fall upon these, we will speak of a preparatory work of the law, whereof the Lord doth ordinarily make use to prepare his own way in men's souls. This may have its own weight, as a mark, with some persons. It is called the Work of the Law, or, the Work of Humiliation. It hath some proportion to that "spirit of bondage," and doth now under the New Testament answer unto it, and usually leadeth on to the "Spirit of adoption."

Only, here, let it be remembered, 1. That we are not to speak of this preparatory work of the law as a negative mark of a true interest in Christ, as if none might lay claim to God's favor who has not had this preparatory work, in the several steps of it, as we are to speak of it; for, as we shall hear, the Lord doth not always keep that path with men. 2. The great reason why we speak of it is, because the Lord dealeth with many, whom he doth effectually call, by some such preparatory work: and to those, who have been so dealt with it may prove strengthening, and will confirm them in laying the more weight on the marks which follow. 3. It may help to encourage others, who are under such bondage of spirit, as a good prognostic of a gracious work to follow; for, as we shall circumstantiate it, it will be rarely found to miscarry and fail of a gracious issue. 4. Where God useth such a preparatory work, he doth not keep one way or measure in it, as we shall hear.

For the more distinct handling of this preparatory work, we shall shortly hint the most ordinary ways by which the Lord leadeth people in unto the covenant savingly, and draweth them unto Christ.

First, There are some called from the womb, as John the Baptist was, or in their very young years, before they can be deeply engaged actively in Satan's ways, as Timothy; it cannot be supposed that those have such a preparatory work as we are to speak of. And because some persons may pretend to this way of effectual calling, we offer these marks of it, whereby those who have been so called may be confirmed.

1st. Such use from their childhood to be kept free of ordinary pollutions wherewith children usually are defiled; as swearing, lying, mocking of religion and religious persons, &c. Those whom God called effectually he sanctifieth them from the time of that effectual calling: "Sin cannot have dominion over them" as over others, "because they are under grace."

2dly. Religion is, as it were, natural to them; I mean, they need not be much pressed to religious duties even

when they are but children ; they run willingly that way, because there is an inward principle of "love constraining them," so as they yield themselves servants of righteousness," without outward constraint.

3dly. Although such know not when they were first acquainted with God, yet they have afterwards such exercises of spirit befalling, as the saints in Scripture, of whose first conversation we hear not, do speak of. They are shut out from God, upon some occasion, now and then, and are admitted to come nearer again to their apprehension : their heart is also further broken up by the ordinances, as is said of Lydia ; and ordinarily they do remember when some special bit of religion and duty, or when some sin, of which they were not taking notice before, was discovered to them. They who can apply these things to themselves, have much to say for their effectual calling from their youth.

Secondly. Some are brought into Christ in a sovereign gospel-way, when the Lord, by some few words of love swallowing up any law-work, quickly taketh a person prisoner at the first, as he did Zaccheus, and others, who, upon a word spoken by Christ, did leave all and follow him ; and we hear no noise of a law-work dealing with them before they close with Christ Jesus.

And because some may pretend to this way of calling we shall touch some things most remarkable in that transaction with Zaccheus, for their clearing and confirmation. (1.) He had some desire to see Christ, and such a desire as made him wave that which some would have judged prudence and discretion, whilst he climbeth up upon a tree that he might see him. (2.) Christ spake to his heart, and that word took such hold upon him that presently with joy he did accept of Christ's offer, and closeth with Christ as Lord, whilst few of any note were following him. (3.) Upon this his heart doth open to the poor, although it seems he was a covetous man before. (4.) He hath a due impression of his former ways, evidencing his respect to the law of Moses, and this he doth signify before all the company then present, not caring

to shame himself in such things as probably were known to the world. (5.) Upon all these things, Christ confirmeth and ratifieth the bargain by his word; recommending to him that oneness of interest which behoved to be between him and the saints, and the thoughts of his own lost condition if Christ had not come and sought him, and found him: all which are clear.

We grant the Lord calleth some so, and if any can lay claim to the special things we have now hinted, they have a good confirmation of God's dealing with them from that Scripture; neither are they to vex themselves because of the want of a distinct preparatory law-work, if their heart hath yielded unto Christ; for a law-work is not desirable, except for this end. Therefore Christ doth offer himself directly in the Scripture, and people are invited to come to him; and although many will not come to him who is the cautioner, until the spirit of bondage distresses them for their debt, yet if any, upon the knowledge of their lost estate, would flee and yield to Christ, none might warrantably press a law-work upon them.

As for others, whom Christ persuaded by a word to follow him; whatsoever he did, or howsoever he spake to them, at his first meeting with them, we must rationally suppose that then he discovered so much of their own necessity, and his own fullness and excellency to them, as made them quit all, and run after him: and if he do so to any, we crave no more, since there is room enough there for the Physician.

So that from all this, as some may be confirmed and strengthened, with whom God hath so dealt, so there is no ground nor occasion for deluded souls to flatter themselves in their condition, who remain ignorant and senseless of their own miseries, and Christ's all-sufficiency, and hold fast deceit.

Thirdly. There are some brought into Christ in a way yet more declarative of his free grace; and this is, when he effectually calleth men at the hour of death. We find somewhat recorded of this way in that pregnant ex-

ample of the "thief on the cross." Although this seems not very pertinent for the purpose in hand, yet we shall speak a little of it, that on the one hand men may be sparing to judge and pass sentence upon either themselves or others before the last gasp; and we shall so circumstantiate it, that, on the other hand, none may dare to delay so great a business to the last hour of their life.

We find these things remarkable in that business between Christ and the thief. 1. The man falleth at odds with his former companion. 2. He dareth not speak a wrong word of God, whose hand is on him, but justifieth him in all that is befallen him. 3. He now seeth Jesus Christ persecuted by the world without a cause, and most injuriously. 4. He discovereth Christ to be a Lord and a King, whilst enemies seem to hold him in contempt. 5. He believeth a being of glory after death so really, that he preferreth a portion of it to the present safety of his bodily life, which he knew Christ was able to grant to him at that time, and he might have chosen that with the other thief. 6. Although he was much abased in himself, and so humbled, that he pleaded but that Christ would remember him, yet he was nobly daring to throw himself upon the covenant, on life and death; and he had so much faith of Christ's all-sufficiency, that he judged a simple remembrance from Christ would satisfiably do his business. 7. He acquiesced sweetly in the word which Christ spake to him for the ground of his comfort. All which are very clear in the case of that poor dying man, and do prove a very real work of God upon his heart.

As this example may encourage some to wait for good from God, who cannot as yet lay clear claim to any gracious work of his Spirit; so we request all, as they love their souls, not to delay their soul-business, hoping for such a cast of Christ's hand in the end, as too many do; this being a rare miracle of mercy with the glory whereof Christ did honourably triumph over the ignominy of his cross; a parallel of which we shall hardly find in

all the Scripture beside. Yea, as there be but few at all saved, "Many be called, but few chosen;" and most few saved this way; so the Lord hath peremptorily threatened to laugh at the calamity, and not to hear the cry of such as mocked formerly at his reproof, and would not hear when he called to them; "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."—Which Scripture, although it doth not shut mercy's door upon any, who at the hour of death do sincerely judge themselves, and flee to Christ, as this penitent thief did; yet it is certain, it implieth that very few, who accepteth not the offer until then, are honored with repentance as he was: and so their cry, as not being sincere, and of the right stamp, shall not be heard.

SECTION II.

The Work of the Law by which the Lord prepares his Way into Men's Souls; which is either more violent and sudden, or more calm and gradual.*

THE *Fourth* and most ordinary way by which many are brought in to Christ is by a clear and discernable work of the law and humiliation; which we ordinarily call *the spirit of bondage*, as was hinted before. We do not mean that every one whose conscience is weakened with sin and fear of wrath doth really close with Christ; the contrary doth appear in Cain, Saul, Judas, &c. But there is a conviction of sin, an awakening of conscience, and work of humiliation, which, as we shall circumstantiate it, doth rarely miscarry or fail of a gracious issue, but ordinarily doth resolve into the *Spirit of adoption*, and a gracious work of God's Spirit. And because the Lord dealeth with many sinners this way, and we find that many are much puzzled about the giving judgment of this law-work, we shall speak of it particularly.

This work is either more violent and suddenly expedited, or it is more sober and sparing, protracted through a greater length of time, and so as the steps of it are very discernable. It is more violent in some, as in the Jailor Paul; and some other converts in the book of the *Acts of the Apostles*, on whom Christ did break in at an instant, and fell on them as with fire and sword, and led them captive terribly. And because some great legal shakings are deceitful, and turn to nothing, if not worse, we shall point at some things remarkable in these converts spoken of before, which did prove the work of the law on them to have had a gracious issue and result.—

1st. Some word of truth or dispensation putteth the person to a dreadful stand, with a great stir in the soul; “some are pricked in heart,” “some fall on trembling,” and this is such a stir, that the person is brought to his wit’s end: “What wilt thou have me to do?” saith Paul, “What must I do to be saved?” saith the Jailor.—

2dly. The person is content to have salvation and God’s friendship on any terms, as the question does import, “What shall I do?” As if he had said, What would I not do? What would I not forego? What would I not undergo? *3dly.* The person accepteth the condition offered by Christ and his servants, as is clear in the fore cited Scriptures. *4thly.* The person presently becometh of one interest with the saints, joining himself with that persecuted society, putting respect on those whom he had formerly persecuted, joining and continuing with them in the profession of Christ on all hazards. Those with whom the Lord hath so dealt have much to say for a gracious work of God’s Spirit in them; and it is like, many of them can date their work from such a particular time and word, or dispensation, and can give some account of what passed between God and them, and of a sensible change following in them from that time forward; as Paul giveth a good account of the work and way of God with him afterwards.

Again, the Lord sometimes carrieth on this work more calmly, softly, and sparingly, protracting it so, as

the several steps of men's exercise under it are very discernable. It would draw a great length to enlarge every step of it; we shall touch the most observable things in it.

1st. The Lord layeth siege to men, who, it may be, have often refused to yield to him, offering himself in the ordinances; and by some word preached, read, or borne in on the mind, or by some providence leading in unto the word, he doth assault the house kept peaceably by the strong man the devil; and thus Christ, who is the stronger man, cometh upon him, and by the spirit of truth, doth fasten the *word* on the man, in which God's curse is denounced against such and such sins, whereof the man knoweth himself guilty. The spirit convinceth the man, and bindeth it upon him, that he is the same person against whom the word of God doth speak, because he is guilty of such sins; and from some sins the man is led on to see more, until ordinarily he come to see the sins of his youth, sins of omission, &c. yea, he is led on, until he see himself guilty almost of the breach of the whole law; he seeth "innumerable evils compassing him," as David speaketh in a fit of exercise. A man sometimes will see ugly sights of sin in this case, and is sharp-sighted to reckon an affinity to almost every sin. Thus "the spirit cometh and convinceth of sin."

2^{dly}. The Lord shaketh a special strong hold in the garrison, a refuge of lies, to which the man betaketh himself when his sins are thus discovered to him. The poor man pretendeth to faith in Christ, whereby he thinks his burden is taken off him, as the Pharisees said, "We have one father, even God;" they pretend to a special relation to God as a common Lord. The spirit of God beats the man from this by the truth of the scriptures, proving that he hath no true faith, and so no interest in Christ, nor any true saving grace; shewing clear differences between the true grace and the counterfeit fancies which the man hath in him; and between him and the truly godly, as Christ laboreth to do to those in *John* viii. 42, 44. "If God were your father, ye

would love me. Ye are of the devil, for ye do the lusts of such a father." So, "fear surpriseth the hypocrite in heart," especially when the Lord discovereth to him conditions in many of these promises wherein he trusted most not easily attainable; he now seeth grace and faith another thing than once he judged them to be. We may in some respect apply that word here, "The spirit convinceth him of sin, because he hath not believed on the son:" he is particularly convinced of unbelief, he seeth now a huge distance between himself and the godly, who he thought before outstripped him only in some unnecessary, proud, hateful preciseness: he now seeth himself deluded, and in the broad way with the perishing multitude: and so in this sight of his misery, coucheth down under his own burden, which, before this time, he thought Christ did bear for him; he now becometh to fear at the promises, because of that and such other words, "What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth."

3dly. The man becometh careful about his salvation, and beginneth to take it to heart, as the one thing necessary; he is brought to this with the Jailor, "What shall I do to be saved?" His salvation becometh the leading thing with him. It was least in his thoughts before, but now it prevaieth, and other things are much misregarded by him. Since his soul is ready to perish, "what shall it profit him to gain the world, if he lose his soul?" Some here are much puzzled with the thoughts of an irrevocable decree to their prejudice, and with the fears of uncertain death, which may attack them before they get matters put to a point; and some are vexed with apprehensions that they are guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is unpardonable, and so are driven a dangerous length, Satan still casting up to them many sad examples of people who have dolefully put an end to their own exercise: but they are in the hand of one who "knoweth how to succour them that are tempted."

4thly. When a man is thus in hazard of miscarrying, the Lord useth a work of preventing mercy towards

him, quietly and under-hand supporting him ; and this is by bearing in upon his mind the possibility of his salvation, leading the man to the remembrance of pregnant proofs of God's free and rich grace, pardoning gross transgressors, such as Manasseh, who was a bloody idolatrous man, and had correspondence with the devil, and yet obtained mercy, and other Scriptures bearing offers of grace and favor indifferently to all who will yield to Christ, whatsoever they have been formerly ; so as the man is brought again to this, " What shall I do to be saved ? " which doth suppose that he apprehendeth a possibility of being saved, else he would not propound the question. He applieth that or the like word to himself, " It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. He findeth nothing excluding him from mercy now, if he have a heart for the thing. Although here, it may be, the man doth not perceive that it is the Lord who upholdeth, yet afterwards he can tell, that " when his foot was slipping, God's mercy held him up ; " as the Psalmist speaketh in another case. And he will afterwards say, when he " was as a beast, and a fool, in many respects, God held him by the hand.

5thly. After this discovery of a possibility to be saved, there is a work of desire quickened in the soul ; which is clear in that same expression, " What shall I do to be saved ? " But sometimes this desire is directed amiss, whilst it goeth out thus, " What shall I do that I may work the works of God ? " In which case the man, formerly perplexed with fear and care about his salvation, would be at some work of his own to extricate himself ; and here he suddenly resolveth to do all that is commanded, and to forego every evil way (yet neglecting Christ Jesus) and so beginneth to take some courage to himself again, " establishing his own righteousness, but not submitting unto the righteousness of God." Whereupon the Lord maketh a new assault on him, intending the discovery of his absolutely broken state in himself, that ~~to~~ room may be made for the cautioner ; as Joshua did to the people, when he found them so bold in their un-

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dertakings, "Ye cannot serve the Lord," saith he, "for he is a holy God, a jealous God," &c. In this new assault the Lord, 1. bends up against the man the spirituality of the law; the commandment cometh with a new charge in the spiritual meaning of it, "The law came," saith Paul, *viz.* in the spiritual meaning of it: Paul had never seen such a fight of the law before. 2. God most holily doth loose the restraining bonds which he had laid upon the man's corruption, and suffereth it not only to boil and swell within, but to threaten to break out in all the outward members. Thus sin groweth bold, and kicketh at the law, becoming exceeding sinful, "but sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once; but, when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. Was then that which is good made death unto me?—God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." 3. The Lord doth discover to the man, more now than ever before, the uncleanness of his righteousness, and what spots are in his best things. These things kill the man, and he dieth in his own conceit, and despaireth of relief in himself, if it come not from above.

6thly. After many ups and downs here, ordinarily the man resolveth some retirement; he desireth to be alone, he cannot keep company as before. Like those in a besieged city, who, when they see they cannot hold out, and would be glad of any good condition from the besieging enemy, go to a council, that they may resolve somewhat; so the man here retireth, that he may speak with himself. This is like that "communing with our own heart," "Thus God leadeth to the wilderness, that he may speak to the heart." When the person is retired, the thoughts of his heart, which were scattered in former steps of the exercise, do more observably throng in here. We shall reduce them into this method. (1.) The man thinks of his unhappy folly in bearing arms against God;

and here there be large thoughts of former ways, with a blushing countenance and self-loathing: "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight," like that of *Psal.* li. 3. "His sin is ever before him." (2.) Then he remembereth how many fair opportunities of yielding to God he hath basely lost: his spirit is like to faint when he remembereth that, as is said in another case, "When I remember these things I pour out my soul in me. O my God, my soul is cast down within me. Deep calleth unto deep, all thy waves are gone over me." (3.) He now thinks of many Christians whom he mocked and despised in his heart, persuading himself now that they are happy, as having chosen the better part; he thinks of the condition of those who wait on Christ, as the Queen of Sheba did of Solomon's servants; "Happy are thy servants," saith she, "who stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom," "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house:" He wisheth to be one of the meanest who have any relation to God; as the *prodigal son* doth speak, he would be as "one of the Father's hired servants." (4.) Then he calleth to mind the good report that is gone abroad of God, according to that testimony—The prophet knew that God was "a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness," &c. The free and large promises and offers of grace come in here; and the glorious practices which have past upon sinners of all sorts, according to the fame of God in Scripture. (5) He thinks with himself, Why hath God spared me so long? and why have I got such a sight of my sin? and why hath he kept me from breaking prison at my own hand, in chusing some unhappy outgate?—why hath he made this strange change on me? It may be it is in his heart to do me good; O that it may be so!—Although all these thoughts be not in the preparatory work of every one, yet they are with many, and very promising where they are.

7^{thly}. Upon all these thoughts and meditations the

man, more seriously than ever before, resolveth to pray, and to make some essay with God, upon life and death; he concludeth, "It can be no worse with him; for if he sit still he perisheth;" as the lepers speak, He considereth, with the pinched prodigal son, "that there is bread enough in the Father's house and to spare, whilst he perisheth for want:" so he goeth to God, for he knoweth not what else to make of his condition, as the prodigal son doth. And it may be, here he resolveth what to speak; but readily things do vary when he is sifted before God, as the prodigal son forgot some of his premeditated prayers, "I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came unto his father, and said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

And now, when he cometh before God, more observably than ever before, *1st*, He beginneth, with the Publican, *afar off*, *Luke xviii. 13.* with many thorough-confessions and self-condemnings, whercof he is very liberal, "I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy," &c. *2dly*. Now begin his thoughts concerning the hearing of his prayer, which he was not wont to question much; he now knows what those expressions of the saints concerning the hearing of their prayers do import. *3dly*. It is observable in this address, that there are many broken sentences, like that of *Psal. vi. 3.* "But thou, O Lord, how long?" supplied with sighs and "groanings which cannot be uttered," and greedy looking upward, thereby speaking more than can be well expressed by words. *4thly*. There be ordinarily some interruptions, and, as it were, diversions; the man speaking sometimes to the enemy, sometimes to his own heart, sometimes to the multitude in the world, as David doth in other cases; "O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end." "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in

me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.” “O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?” *5thly*. It is observable here, that sometimes the man will halt and be silent, to hear some indistinct whispering of a joyful sound glancing on the mind, or some news in some broken word of Scripture, which, it may be, the man scarcely knoweth to be Scripture, or whether it is come from God, or whether an injection from Satan to delude him; yet this he hath resolved, only to “hear what God the Lord will speak,” as, upon another occasion. *6thly*. More distinct promises come into the man’s mind, whereupon he assayeth to lay hold, but is beaten off with objections, as in another case the Psalmist is, “But thou art holy—But I am a worm.” Now it is about the dawning of the day with the man, and faith will stir as soon as the Lord imparteth “the joyful sound,” This is the substance of the covenant, which may be shortly summed up in these words, “Christ Jesus is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.”

We can speak no further of the man’s exercise as a preparatory work; for what followeth is more than preparatory: yet, that the exercise may appear complete and full, we shall add here, that after all these things, the Lord, it may be, after many answers of divers sorts, mightily conveyeth the sound of his covenant into the heart, and determineth the heart to close with it; and God now draweth so to Christ, and so shapeth out the heart for him, that the conception cannot miscarry; for now the heart is so in breadth and length for him, as that less cannot satisfy, and more is not desired; “Whom have I in heaven but thee? or whom have I desired on earth beside thee?” The soul now resolveth to die if he command so, yet at his door, and facing to him-wards.

We have drawn this preparatory work to some length, not tying any man to such a work so circumstantiated: only we say, the Lord dealeth so with some; and where he so convinceth of sin, corruption, and self-emptiness,

and maketh a man take salvation to heart as the one thing necessary, and setteth him on work in the use of the means which God hath appointed for relief; I say, such a work rarely shall be found to fail of a good issue and gracious result.

SECTION III.

The difference betwixt that preparatory Law-work which hath a gracious Issue and the Convictions of Hypocrites.

Object. HYPOCRITES and reprobates have great stirrings of conscience, and deep convictions about sin, setting them on work sometimes, and I do suspect any preparatory work of the law I ever had to be but such as they have.

Answer. It will be hard to give sure essential differences between the preparatory work in those in whom afterwards Christ is formed and those legal stirrings which are sometimes in reprobates. If there were not some gracious result of these convictions and wakenings of conscience in the Lord's people, and other marks, of which we shall speak afterwards, it were hard to adventure upon any difference that is clear in these legal stirrings. Yet, for answer to the objection, I shall offer some things, which rarely will be found in the stirrings of reprobates, and which are ordinarily found in that law-work which hath a gracious issue.

1st. The convictions of hypocrites and reprobates are usually confined to some very gross transgressions. Saul grants no more but the *persecuting of David*; Judas grants only the *betraying of innocent blood*: but usually those convictions, by which the Lord prepareth his own way in the soul, although they may begin at one or more gross particular transgressions, yet they sist not; but the man is led on to see many breaches of the law, and "innumerable evils compassing him," as David speaketh in the sight of his sin. And withal, that universal conviction, if I may call it so, is not general, as usually we hear senseless men saying, "that in all things

they sin ;” but it is particular and condescending, as Paul afterwards spake of himself ; he not only is the *chief of sinners*, but particularly, he was a *blasphemer, a persecutor*.

2dly. The convictions which hypocrites have do seldom reach their corruption, and that body of death, which breeds an averseness from what is good, and strongly inclineth to what is evil. Ordinarily, where we find hypocrites speaking of themselves in Scripture, they speak loftily, and with some self-conceit, both as to their freedom from corruption. The Pharisees say to the poor man, “Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us ?” as if they themselves were not as corrupt by nature as he : they speak of great sins, as Hazeael did, “Am I a dog, that I should do this great thing ?” and also in their undertakings of duty, as that *scribe* spake, “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” See how the people do speak ; they undertake to do all that God will command them : so that they still “go about,” in any case, “to establish their own righteousness, not submitting unto the righteousness of God.” But I may say, that convictions and exercise about corruption, and that body of death, inclining to evil, and disabling for good, is not the least part of the work where the Lord is preparing his own way. They use to judge themselves very wretched because of a body of sin, and are at their wits’ end how to be delivered, as Paul speaketh, when he is under the exercise of it afterwards, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?”

3dly. It will ordinarily be found, that the convictions which are in hypocrites either are not so serious, as that some other business will not put them out of head before any satisfaction be gotten ; as in Cain, who went and *built a city*, and we hear no more of his convictions. Felix went away until a more *convenient time*, and we hear no more of his *trembling* ; or if that work become very serious, then it runneth to the other extremity, and *despair of relief*, leaving no room for any outgate. So

we find Judas very serious in his convictions, yet he grew desperate, and hanged himself. But where the Lord prepareth his own way, the work is both so serious as the person cannot be put off it, until he finds some satisfaction, and yet under that very seriousness he lieth open for relief : both which are clear in the Jailor's words, " What must I do to be saved ? " This serious inquiry after relief is a very observable thing in the preparatory work which leadeth on to Christ. Yet we desire none to lay too much weight on these things, since God hath allowed clear differences between the precious and the vile.

Object. I still fear I have not had so thorough a fight of my sin and misery as the Lord giveth to many whom he effectually calleth, especially to great transgressors, such as I am.

Answ. It is true, the Lord discovereth to some great fights of their sin and misery, and they are thereby put under great legal terrors ; but as all are not brought in by that sensible preparatory law-work, as we shewed before, so even those who are dealt with after that way are very differently and variously exercised in regard of the degrees of terror, and of the continuance of that work. The Jailor hath a violent work of very short continuance : Paul hath a work continuing three day ; some persons are " in bondage through fear of death all their days : " so that we must not limit the Lord to one way of working here. The main thing we are to look unto in these legal wakenings and convictions of sin and misery is, if the Lord reach those ends in us for which usually these stirrings and convictions are sent into the soul, and if those ends be reached, it is well ; we are not to vex ourselves about any preparatory work further. Now, those ends which God driveth ordinarily with sinners by these legal terrors and wakenings of conscience are four.

First. The Lord discovers fights of men's sin and misery to them, to chase them out of themselves, and to put them out of conceit of their own righteousness. Men

naturally have great thoughts of themselves, and do incline much to the covenant of works ; the Lord therefore doth discover to them so much of their sin and corruption, even in their best things, that they are made to loathe themselves, and to despair of relief in themselves ; and so they are forced to flee out of themselves, and from the covenant of works, to seek refuge elsewhere—“ They become dead to themselves and the law,” as to the point of justification ; then “ have they no more confidence in the flesh,” this is supposed in the offers of Christ “ coming to seek and save that which is lost,” and “ to be a physician to those who are sick.”

The *second* great end is, To commend Christ Jesus to men's hearts above all things, that so they may fall in love with him, and betake themselves to that *treasure* and *jewel* which only enricheth, and, by so doing, may serve the Lord's design in the contrivement of the gospel, which was the manifestation of his free grace thro' Christ Jesus in the salvation of men. The sight of a man's own misery and damnable estate by nature is a ready way to make him prize Christ highly, who alone can set such a wretch at liberty : yea, it not only leadeth a man to an high esteem of Christ, but also of all things that relate to that way of salvation, as grace, the new covenant, faith, and maketh him carefully to gather and treasure up his *Michtams* or golden scriptures for the confirmation of his interest in these things.

The *third* great end is, to deter and scar people from sin, and to make them cast out with it, and consent to put their neck under all his yoke. God kindleth some sparks of hell in men's bosoms by the discovery of their sin, as a ready mean to make them henceforth stand in awe, knowing “ how bitter a thing it is to depart from the Lord.” So we find rest offered to the weary, upon condition they will take on Christ's yoke. “ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” And God offereth to own men as their God and Father, upon condition they will allow no peaceable abode to

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Belial. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 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 *fourth* great end is, to work up men to a patient and thankful submission to all the Master's pleasure.— This is a singular piece of work, "Then shalt thou remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord." The sight of a man's own vileness and deservings maketh him silent, and to lay his hand on his mouth, whatsoever God doth unto him; "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." "God hath punished us less than our iniquities." "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned." The man careth not what God doth to him, or how he deals with him, if he save him from the deserved wrath to come: also any mercy is a large mercy to him who hath seen such a sight of himself; he is "less than the least of mercies;" "any crumb falling from the Master's table is welcome:" he thinks it rich "mercy that he is not consumed." This is the thing that marvellously maketh God's poor crossed people so silent under, and satisfied with, their lot; nay, they think he deserveth hell who openeth his mouth at any thing God doth to him, since he hath pardoned his transgressions.

So then, for satisfying the objection, I say, if the Lord hath driven thee out of thyself, and commended Christ to thy heart above all things, and made thee resolve, in his strength, to wage war with every known transgression, and thou art in some measure as a weaned child, acquiescing in what he doth unto thee, desiring to lay thy hand on thy mouth thankfully; then thy convictions of sin and misery, and whatsoever thou dost plead as a prepa-

ratory work, is sufficient, and thou art to debate no more concerning it. Only be advised so to study new discoveries of the sense of thy lost condition every day, because of thy old and new sins; and also to see fresh help in Christ, who is a priest for ever to make intercession; and to have the work of sanctification and patience with thankfulness renewed and quickened often: for somewhat of that work which abaseth thee, exalteth Christ, and conformeth to his will, must convey thee throughout all thy lifetime in this world.

Chapter III.

SECTION I.

Of Faith.

WE come now to speak of some more clear and sure marks, by which men may take up their gracious state and interest in Christ. The *first* thing whereby men may know it is, their closing with Christ in the gospel, wherein he is held forth. This is believing, or faith, which is the condition of the covenant; "It is of faith," "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Now, although in propriety of speech, it is hard to prove an interest by faith, it being our very interest in him; yet the heart's closing with Christ Jesus is so discernable in itself, that we may well place it amongst the marks of a gracious state: and if a man can make out this, that he believeth on and in Christ Jesus, he thereby doth prove a very true interest in him.

Many do fear at this as a mark, upon one of these three grounds ordinarily.

(1.) Some conceive faith to be a difficult mysterious thing, hardly attainable. To these I say, Do not mistake; faith is not so difficult as many do apprehend it

to be. I grant true faith in the meanest degree is the gift of God, and above the power of flesh and blood ; for God must “ draw men to Christ,” “ No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ to believe on him.” Yet it were a reflection upon Christ, and all he hath done, to say it were a matter of insuperable difficulty ; as is clear, “ 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. But what faith it ? The world is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart ; that is, the word of faith which we preach. That 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 ; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” It were, according to that Scripture, as much upon the matter as to say, Christ came not from heaven, is not risen from the dead, or ascended victorious to heaven. I say, he hath made the way to heaven most easy ; and faith, which is the condition required on our part, more easy than men do imagine. For the better understanding of this, consider that justifying faith is not to believe that I am elected, or to believe that God loveth me, or that Christ died for me, or the like ; these things are indeed very difficult, and almost impossible at the first hand to be attained to by those who are serious ; whilst natural Atheists and deluded hypocrites find no difficulty in asserting all those things : I say, true justifying faith is not any of the foresaid things ; neither is it simply the believing of any sentence that is written, or that can be thought upon. I grant, he that believeth on Christ Jesus believeth what God hath said concerning man’s sinful miserable condition by nature, and he believeth that to be true, that “ there is life in the Son, who

was slain, and is risen again from the dead :” but none of these, nor the believing of many such truths, do speak out justifying faith, or that believing on the Son of God spoken of in Scripture : for then it were simply an act of the understanding : but true justifying faith, which we now seek after, as a good mark of an interest in Christ, is chiefly and principally an act or work of the heart and will ; having presupposed sundry things about truth in the understanding “ with the heart it is believed “ unto righteousness ;” and although it seem, that a man is saved upon condition that he believe this truth, “ God raised Christ from the dead,” yet we must understand another thing there, than the believing the truth of that proposition : for beside that all devils have that faith, whereby they believe that God raised Christ from the dead, so the Scripture hath clearly resolved justifying faith into a *receiving* of Christ ; “ As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” The *receiving* of Christ is there explained to be the *believing on his name*. It is still called a *slaying on the Lord*, a *trusting in God*, often mentioned in the *Psalms*, and the word is a *leaning on him*. It is a *believing on Christ*, “ This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent, and often so expressed in the New Testament.— When God maketh men believe savingly, he is said to *draw* them unto Christ ; and when the Lord inviteth them to come to him, “ All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” The kingdom of heaven is like a man finding a jewel, wherewith he falleth in love—Now, I say, this acting of the heart on Christ Jesus is not so difficult a thing as is conceived.— Shall that be judged a mysterious difficult thing which doth consist much in desire ? If men have but an appetite, they have it ; for they are “ blessed that hunger after righteousness ;” “ If you will you are welcome ;” It is a matter of such intricacy and insuperable difficulty

greedily *to look* to that exalted Saviour? "Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth:" and to receive a thing that is offered, held forth, and declared to be mine, if I will but accept and take it, and in a manner "open my mouth," and give way to it? "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Such a thing is faith, if not less. Oh, if I could persuade people what is justifying faith, which impropriateth Christ to me! We often scar people from their just rest and quiet, by making them to apprehend faith to be some deep mysterious thing, and by moving unnecessary doubts about it, whereby it is needlessly darkened.

(2.) Some make no use of this mark, as judging it a high presumptuous crime to pretend to so excellent a thing as is the very condition of the new covenant. To these I say, You need not startle so much at it, as if it were high pride to pretend to it: for whatsoever true faith be, men must resolve to have it, or nothing at all; all other marks are in vain without it; a thousand things besides will not do the business: "Unless a man believe, he abideth in the state of condemnation," "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

(3.) Others do not meddle with this noble mark of faith, because they judge it a work of the greatest difficulty to find out faith where it is. To these I say, It is not so difficult to find it out, since "he that believeth, hath the witness in himself; it is a thing which by some serious search may be known. Not only may we do much to find it out by the preparatory work going before it in many, as the apprehending and believing of a man's lost estate, and that he cannot do his own business, and that there is satisfying fullness in Christ, very desirable if he could overtake it; a serious minding of this, with a heart laid open for relief; as also by the ordinary companions and concomitants of it, *viz.* the liking of Christ's dominion, his kingly and prophetic office, a

desire to resign myself wholly up to him, to be at his disposing; as also by the native consequence of it, *viz.* the affoilzieing of the word, the affoilzieing of my own conscience according to the word, a heart purifying work, a working by love; I say, not only may we know faith by these things, but it is discernable by itself and of its own nature. Although I deny not but there must be some help of God's Spirit, "by which we know what is freely given unto us of God," as also, that God hath allowed many evidences and marks as precious helps, whereby men may clear up faith more fully to themselves, "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;" yet I still say, that faith, or believing, which is some acting of the heart upon Christ in the gospel, and the transacting with him there, is discernable of itself, and by itself, to a judicious understanding person, with an ordinary influence of the spirit, unless the Lord, for reasons known to himself, do overcloud a man's reflex light, by which he should take up and perceive what is in him.

This justifying faith, which we assert to be so discernable, is, in the Lord's deep wisdom and gracious condescendency, variously expressed in Scripture, according to the different actings of it upon God, and outgoings after him; so as every one who hath it may find and take it up in his own mould. It sometimes acteth by a desire of union with him in Christ: this is that *looking* to him in *Isa.* xlv. 22. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." This seems to be a weak act of faith, and far below other actings of it at other times perhaps in that same person. Men will look to what they dare not approach, to their apprehension which they dare not touch or embrace: they may look to one to whom they dare not speak: yet God hath made the promise to faith in that acting, as the fore cited scripture doth shew: and this he hath done mercifully and wisely; for this is the only discernable way of the acting of faith of some persons sometimes. Such are the actings or out-

goings of faith expressed in scripture by "hungering and thirsting after righteousness," and that expressed by *willing*, "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Again, this faith goeth out sometimes in the act of recumbency, or leaning on the Lord, the soul taking up Christ then as a resting-stone, and God hath so held him out, although he be a stumbling-stone to others. This acting of it is hinted in the expressions of *trusting* and *staying* on God, so often mentioned in scripture: and precious promises are made in this acting of faith, as "God will keep them in perfect peace whose minds are stayed on him; because such do trust in him. Trust in the Lord; for with him is everlasting strength." "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which abideth for ever." I say, the Lord hath made promises to this way of faith's acting, as knowing it will often go out after him in this way with many persons; and this way of its acting will be most discernable to them.

It goeth out after God sometimes by an act of waiting; when the soul hath somewhat depending before God, and hath not got out his mind satisfyingly concerning that thing, then faith doth wait; and so it hath the promise, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me." Sometimes it acteth in a willful way upon the Lord, when the soul apprehendeth God thrusting it away, and threatening its ruin; "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." The faith of that poor woman of Canaan, so highly commended by Christ, did go out in this way of willful acting over difficulties; and the Lord speaketh much good of it, and to it, because some will be put to it to exercise faith that way sometimes, and so they have that for their encouragement. It were tedious to instance all the several ways of the acting of faith upon, and its exercise about, and outgoing after Christ. I may say, according to the various conditions and pressures of the soul of man, the Lord hath variously held out himself and his fullness in Christ, under divers notions, as might most fitly meet the distress or condition of man.

And accordingly faith, which God hath appointed to traffic and travel between Christ and man, as the instrument of conveyance of his fulness unto man, and of maintaining union and communion with him, acteth variously and differently upon God in Christ ; for faith is the very shaping out of a man's heart according to God's device of salvation by Christ Jesus, " in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell ;" so that, let Christ turn what way he will, faith pointeth that way. Now he turneth all ways in which he can be useful to poor man ; and therefore faith acteth accordingly on him for drawing out of that fulness, according to a man's case and condition, As for example, The soul is *naked*, destitute of a covering to keep it from the storm of God's wrath ; Christ is *fine raiment*, then accordingly faith's work here is to " put on the Lord Jesus."—The soul is hungry and thirsty after somewhat that may everlastingly satisfy ; Christ Jesus is " milk, wine, water, the bread of life, and the true manna ;" he is " the feast of fat things, and of wine refined ;" then the work and exercise of faith is to " go, buy, eat and drink abundantly. The soul is pursued for guilt more or less, and is not law-biding ; Christ Jesus is the city of refuge, and the high priest there, during whose lifetime, that is for ever, the poor man who gets thither is safe ; then the work and exercise of faith is " to flee thither for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us. In a word, whatsoever way he may benefit poor man, so he speaketh of himself. And as he holdeth out himself in the Scripture, so faith doth point towards him. If he be a bridegroom, faith will go out in a marriage relation : if he be a father, faith pleadeth the man to be a child : if he be a shepherd, faith pleads the man may be one of his sheep ; if he be a Lord, faith calleth him so, which none can do but by the Spirit of Jesus ; if he be dead, and risen again for our justification, faith " believeth God hath raised him" on that account, Wheresoever he be, there would faith be ; and whatsoever he is, faith would be somewhat proportionally : for by faith the heart is sha-

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pen out in breadth and length for him ; yea, when the fame and report of him goeth abroad in his truth, altho' faith seeth not much, yet it " believeth on his name," upon the very fame he hath sent abroad of himself, *John* i. 12.

But here, for avoiding of mistakes, consider, (1.) That although justifying faith acteth so variously, yet every believer who hath a good title to Christ Jesus hath not all these various actings and exercises of faith : for his condition craveth them not ; and also the Master is pleased not to lead out the faith of some persons, at some times, in some of these ways, for reasons known to himself, even when their necessity (to their apprehension) calleth for such acting of faith. Surely, every one dare not say, " Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him." Many would not have gone up with the woman of Canaan I spake of, but would have been discouraged, and have quit the pursuit. It is on this account that Christ doth highly commend the faith of some beyond the faith of others ; of the centurion ; of the woman of Canaan. Many good people are much disquieted concerning their faith, because it goeth not out in all those ways we find recorded in Scripture ; but there is hardly any man will be found whose faith hath acted all these ways.

(2.) Many of these actings of faith are much intended and remitted. They are sometimes strong and vigorous, and discernible ; and sometimes they fail, and misbelief doth prevail, so as it were an uncertain thing to judge of a man's state by these. We find the saints very different from themselves in regard of the actings of faith sometimes, as we shewed before.

(3.) Each one of these actings of faith speaketh good to the person in whom it is, and hath promises annexed unto it, as we have said. Yet,

(4.) Although these actings of faith have promises annexed unto them, they are not, for that, the condition of the new covenant ; for then every one behoved to have each one of them, which is not true, as we said before. A promise is made to him who overcometh ; but perfe-

verance is not the condition of the new covenant, but doth suppose it. There are promises made to the exercise of all graces in Scripture ; but only faith is the condition of the covenant. I say then, these promises are made to these actings of faith, not as such, but as they do suppose justifying faith, which is the condition of the covenant. All these are actings of faith, but not as it is justifying. Therefore,

(5.) There is somewhat common to all gracious persons, which may be supposed by all the foresaid actings of faith, wherein the nature and essence of justifying faith standeth. And this is the heart's satisfaction concerning God's device of salvation by Christ ; when man pleaseth God's invention of satisfaction to justice, through Christ Jesus, in whom all fulness doth dwell now by the Father's pleasure ; when the soul and heart of man acquiesceth in that, then it believeth unto salvation. As at first the Lord made man suitable to the covenant of works, by creating him perfect, and so putting him in a capacity to perform his will in that covenant ; so, under the new covenant, when God giveth the new heart to man, he setteth the idea and stamp of all his device in the new covenant upon the man, so as there is a consonancy to God's will there : thus he beareth the image of the second Adam, Christ Jesus, on him. This is a great part of the new heart, and is most opposed to works ; since now the man absolutely falleth off works, " becoming dead to the law, as to the point of justification, by the body of Christ." Man perceiving that God hath devised a way of satisfying divine justice, and recovering lost man by the incarnation of Christ, he thinks this so good and sure a way, that he absolutely giveth up with the law, as I said before, and closeth with this device ; and this is believing or faith, very opposite to works, and all resting thereupon. This cannot fail to be in all gracious persons, in whom many of the actings of faith are not to be found. This doth clearly suppose known distress in a man, without all relief in himself ; this supposeth known fulness in Christ, as the alone sufficient re-

lief ; this imports a sort of impropriation ; for the heart, pleasing that device, in so far inclining towards it. This is a thing clearly supposed in all the actings of faith spoken of before. He that greedily hungereth, hath this ; and he that leaneth, hath this ; and he that puts on Christ, hath this, &c. This is to esteem " Christ the wisdom and power of God" to salvation ; so is he said to be to all that believe. They esteem that device wise and sure, befitting God ; and that is to believe. On this account, " Christ, who is the rejected stone to many, is precious to them who believe ;" a fit stone to recover, fortify, and beautify, the tottering building and fabrick of lost man. " To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold I lay in Si-on a chief Corner-stone, elect, precious ; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious ; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner ; And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed." " The kingdom of God is like a man finding a treasure, for which with joy he selleth all." These words hold out the very way of believing, viz. salvation is discovered in the gospel to be by Christ ; the heart valueth that invention as satisfying. This is to believe on the Son of God lifted up ; which is compared with the looking to the brazen serpent. It was man's approbation of that device which made it effectual for his healing ; so is it here, " He that so believeth, setteth " to his seal that God is true." True ? Wherein ? In that record he hath borne, that God hath proved life for men, and placed it all in Christ ; " He that believeth not, maketh God a liar." Wherein ? In his saying that Christ is a safe and sure way to heaven. This is the

pleasing and acquiescing in that device ; and it is consonant to all I know spoken of justifying faith in Scripture. This is the believing on Christ and on his name, the receiving of him, and resting on him, for salvation, in our *Catechism* ; the believing that Jesus is the Christ, that is, the anointed One, whom the Father hath sealed, and set apart, and qualified for the work of reconciling man unto God ; and “ he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” This is to “ believe with the heart that God hath raised Christ from the dead.” The man believeth Christ died, and is raised on the account of satisfaction for man’s transgression. Devils may believe that : nay, but the man I speak of “ believeth it with “ his heart,” (which no natural man doth, until a new heart be given unto him) ; that is, he cordially pleaseth, is satisfied with, and acquiesceth in, this noble invention. And thus faith layeth out itself now and then in its actings, outgoings, and exercise, according to all the covenant-relations under which Christ is held forth in the Scripture.

Now, I say, this faith is discernible, not only in these actings many times ; a man may know if his heart doth hunger after Christ, and flee for refuge to him, when pursued ; and if he doth commit himself unto God, but also in its very nature : as it is justifying, it is discernible, and may be known. A man may clearly know, if from known distress in himself, upon the report and fame of Christ’s fulness, his heart doth please God’s device in the new covenant ; if it goeth out after Christ in that invention, and pleaseth him as Lord of the life of men, terminating and resting there, and no where else ; acquiescing in that contrivement with desire and complacency. This is a discernible thing : therefore I entreat men impartially to examine themselves ; and if they find that their heart has closed so with that device of salvation, and is gone out after him as precious, that thereupon they conclude a sure and true interest in Christ Jesus, and a good claim and title to the crown ; since “ he that believeth shall never perish, but have everlasting life.”

SECTION II.

The difference between the Faith of Hypocrites and true saving justifying Faith.

Object. HYPOCRITES and reprobates have a sort of faith and are said to believe : “ Many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men.” “ Then Simon the forcerer himself believed also,” and cannot chuse but go out after Christ, and that device of salvation, when they hear of it ; and they profess they do so, yet are deluded, and so may I be.

Answ. To say nothing of that thought of your heart, whereby you wonder that any man should not please the device of salvation by Christ, and lead out towards him as a very promising thing, and speaking out justifying faith to be in your bosom ; and, to say nothing in contradiction to that which you think that a natural man, whilst such, and before he gets a new heart, can please that device, and believe with his heart, and affectionately, that which perfectly overthroweth the covenant of works, and abaseth man in the point of self-righteousness already attained, or that can be attained to by him, which is inconsistent with many scriptural truths ; I offer these differences between the faith of all hypocrites or reprobates and that true saving justifying faith whereof we have spoken.

1st. They never close with Christ Jesus in that device and him alone, as a sufficient covering of the eyes, as is said of Abraham to Sarah, they still hold fast somewhat of their own, at least to help to procure God's favor and salvation : their heart doth still speak, as that young man's speech, doth insinuate, “ What shall I do to inherit eternal life ?” Beside that, they do still retain their former lovers, and will not break their covenants with hell and death, imagining they may have Christ with these things equally sharing in their heart ; contrary to that, “ A man cannot serve two masters.” Either Christ

must be judged absolute Lord, and worthy to be so, or nothing at all ; and so it is clear their heart is not shapen out for that device of salvation by Christ, whom God hath alone made Lord here, in whom all fulness shall dwell. But where justifying faith is, the soul of a man and his heart doth close with Christ, and him alone, "having no confidence in the flesh," he trusteth only in God. Also the man here giveth up with other lovers ; as they become rivals of Christ, he resolves "not to be for another." He calls him Lord, "which a man can only do by the spirit of Christ."

2dly. As hypocrites and reprobates do never close with Christ alone, so they do never close with full Christ as he is anointed to be a king, to rule over a man in all things ; a Priest, to procure pardon and to make peace for man upon all occasions ; a prophet, to be wisdom, and a teacher and counsellor in all cases to man ; so they do not receive Christ, especially in the first and third office. But where true justifying faith is, a man closeth with whole Christ in all his offices, judging all his "will good, holy, just and spiritual," and "right concerning all things," "making mention of his righteousness only."

The man also giveth up himself to be taught of him ; "Learn of me." So that "Christ is made to the true believer, with his own consent, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption." And although he hath not all these things formally in exercise when his heart goeth out after Christ, yet, upon search and trial, it will be found with him, as I have said.

3dly. Hypocrites and reprobates do never close with Christ, and all the inconveniencies that may follow him ; they stick at that with the scribe ; but where true justifying faith is, a man doth close with him on all hazards ; he resolveth to forego all rather than to forego Christ. "We have left all, and have followed thee," "he reckoneth all to be loss and dung for the excellency of Christ Jesus, as his Lord, and to be found in him."

We might give other differences also; as that true faith is operative, "purifying the heart," "working by love," *Gal. v. 6.* whilst "hypocrites do only cleanse the outside of the platter," and "do all to be seen of men," "not seeking the honour that is of God only and so cannot believe:" we might also shew that true faith is never alone in a man, but attended with other saving graces. But because these things will coincide with what followeth, and here we are shewing that a man may take up his gracious state by his faith, and the acting thereof on Christ, we pass these things.

Chapter V.

OF THE NEW CREATURE.

THE *Second* great mark of a gracious state and true saving interest in Jesus Christ, is the new creature; "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." This new creation, or renovation of that man, is a very sensible change; although not in those who are effectually called from the womb, or in their younger years, (because those have had this new creature from that time in them, so as this change in after-periods of time is not discernible) yet in those who have been regenerated and brought in to Christ after they were come to greater age, and so have more palpably been under the "power of darkness," before they were "translated into the kingdom of Christ." But all who do warrantably pretend to Christ, this new creature must be; although some do not know experimentally the contraries of every part of it so as others do; because they have not been equally in regard of practice under the power of darkness. This new creature is called *the new man*, which doth hold out the extent of it. It is not simply a new tongue or new hand, but *a new man*. There is a principle of new life and motion put in the man, which is the new

heart; which new principle of life sendeth forth acts of life, or of "conformity to the image of him who created it," so as the party is renewed in some measure every way. This renovation of the man who is in Christ may be reduced into these two great heads.

First, There is a renovation of the man's person, soul and body, in some measure.

1st. His understanding is renewed, so as he judgeth "Christ preached," in the gospel to be "the wisdom and power of God," a wise and strong device befitting God: He knoweth the things of God really and solidly, not to be *yea and nay*, and uncertain fancies; but all to be *yea and amen*, solid, certain, substantial things, having a desirable accomplishment in Christ, and resolving much in him; "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: but he that is spiritual judgeth all things." "As God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us."—Natural men, educated under gospel-ordinances, altho' they have some notional knowledge of God, Christ, the promises, the motions of the Holy Spirit, so as they may confer, preach, and dispute of these things; yet they look on them as common received maxims of Christianity, from which to recede were a singularity and disgrace; but not as real, solid, substantial truths, so as to adventure their souls and everlasting being on them. The understanding is renewed also, to take up somewhat of God in the creatures, as bearing sparks of his glorious attributes; they see "the heavens declaring his glory and power," and somewhat of God in providence, and dispensations that fall out: "His wondrous works declare that his name is near." The understanding also taketh up the conditions and cases of the soul other-

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wife than it was wont to do ; as we find the saints usually speaking in Scripture, “ O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord ;” “ My soul said ; Thy face will I seek ;” “ Why art thou cast down, O my soul ?” “ Return unto thy rest, O my soul.”

2dly. The heart and affections are renewed. The heart is made “ a new heart, a heart of flesh,” capable of impressions, having a copy of his law stamped on it, and the fear of God put into it, whereby the man’s duty becometh in a manner native and kindly to the man— It was before a *heart of stone*, void of the fear of God: The affections are renewed now : the love is renewed in some good measure ; it goeth out after God ; “ I will love the Lord ;” after his law, “ O how love I thy law !” after those who have God’s image in them, “ By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” “ We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” This love to God’s people is upon a pure account, as they are the children of God, and do keep his statutes ; it is “ with a pure heart fervently ;” and therefore it goeth towards all such whom the man knoweth or apprehendeth to be such ; “ I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts,” in all cases and conditions, even where there is nothing to beautify or commend but the image of God. And this love is so *fervent* many times, that it putteth itself out in all relations, so as a man seeketh a godly wife, a godly master, a godly servant, a godly counsellor, if he have to chuse upon ; “ Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me : he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.” And “ it is not quenched by many waters :” Many imperfections and infirmities, difference in opinion, wrongs received, will not altogether quench love. Also it is communicative of good according to its measure, and as the case of the poor godly requireth ; “ Thou art my Lord, my goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints ; But who hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need,

and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." The man's hatred is also renewed, and is now bended against sin; "I hate vain thoughts;" against God's enemies, as such, "Do not I hate them that hate thee?" &c. The joy or delight is renewed, for it runneth towards God;—"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee:" towards his law and will; "His delight is in the law of the Lord:" and towards the godly and their fellowship; "To the saints, in whom is all my delight." The sorrow is turned against sin which hath wronged Christ: "Looking to him whom they have pierced, they mourn." "The sorrow is godly" there, and against what encroacheth upon God's honor. "They are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and the reproach of that is their burden." There is some renovation in all the affections, as in every other part of the soul pointing now towards God.

3dly. The very outward members of the man are renewed, as the Scripture speaks, the tongue, the eye, the ear, the hand, the foot, so that "those members which once were improved as weapons of unrighteousness unto sin, are now improved as weapons of righteousness unto holiness."

Secondly. A man who is in Christ is renewed in some measure in all his ways: "Behold, all things are become new." The man becometh new, 1st. In the way of his interest. He was upon *any good* before, though but apparent, and at best but external; "Many say, who will shew us any good?" but now his interest and business is, how to "be found in Christ," in that day, or how to be forthcoming to him, and "walk before him in the light of the living," which he would chuse among all the mercies that fill this earth; "The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy, teach me thy statutes." The interest of Christ also becometh the man's interest, as appeareth in

the song of Hannah, and in the song of Mary. It is strange to see people newly converted, and having reached but the beginning of knowledge, concern and interest themselves in the public matters of Christ's kingdom, so desirous to have him riding prosperously, and subduing the people under him.

2dly. The man that is in Christ, is renewed in the way of his worship. He was wont to "serve God in the oldness of the letter," for the fashion, answering the letter of the command in the outside of duty, which one in whom the old man hath absolute dominion can do; but now he worshippeth God "in newness of spirit," in a new way, wherein he is "helped by the Spirit of God," beyond the reach of flesh and blood. He "serveth now the true and living God, in spirit and in truth," having spiritual apprehensions of God, and engaged in his very soul in that work, doing and saying truly and not feignedly when he worshippeth; still "desiring to approach unto him as a living God," who heareth and seeth him, and can accept his service. I grant he fails of this many times; yet I may say, such worship he intendeth, and sometimes overtaketh, and doth not much reckon that worship which is not so performed unto God; and the iniquity of his holy things is not the least part of his burden and exercise. Such a worship natural men are strangers unto, whilst they babble out their vain-glorious boastings, like the Pharisee, "to an unknown God."

3dly. The man that is in Christ is renewed in the way of his outward calling and employment in the world; he now resolveth to be about it, because God hath commanded so; "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;" and to eye God in it as the last end, "doing it to his glory;" and studieth to keep some intercourse with God in the exercise of his outward employments, as Jacob doth in his latter-will, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord;" and as Nehemiah did, "Then the King said unto me, for what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven;" so as the

man resolveth to walk with God, and "set him always before him," wherein I deny not he faileth often.

4thly. He becometh new in the way of his relations; he becometh a more dutiful husband, father, brother, master, servant, neighbor. "Herein doth he exercise himself to keep a conscience void of offence towards men as well as towards God, becoming all things to all men."

5thly. He becometh new in the way of lawful liberties; he studieth to make use of meat, drink, sleep, recreations, apparel, with an eye to God, laboring not to come under the power of any lawful thing; "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any;" nor to give offence to others in the use of these things. "For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification; not using liberty as an occasion to the flesh." Yea, he laboreth to use all these things as a stranger on earth, so as his moderation may appear; "Let your moderation be known unto all men." And some way he doth eye God as the last end in these things; "doing all to the glory of God:" so as we may say of that man, "Old things are much passed away, all things are," in some measure, "become new." He that is so a new creature is undoubtedly in Christ.

This renovation of a man in all manner of conversation, and this being under law to God in all things, is that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Men may fancy things to themselves, but unless they study to approve themselves unto God in all well-pleasing, and reach some inward testimony of sincerity that way, they shall not assure their hearts before him. "The testimony of men's conscience is their rejoicing. By this we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. And hereby we know that we are of the

truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God;” No confidence if the heart condemn. This is the new creature, having a principle of new spiritual life infused by God into the heart, whereby it becometh new, and putteth forth acts of new life throughout the whole man, as we have said, so as he pointeth towards the whole law.

1. Towards these commands which forbid sin; so he resolveth to set against secret sins, “not to lay a stumbling-block before the blind:” little sins, which are judged so by many, the least things of the law: “Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven:” spiritual sins, filthiness of the spirit; “Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” Sins of omission as well as of commission, since men are to be judged by these, “Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink.” Yea, sins that are winded in into his natural humour and constitution, and so are as “a right eye or hand” to him; “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee,” &c. This new principle of life, by the good hand of God, maketh the man set against every known sin, so far as not to allow peaceable abode to any known darkness; “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”

2. As also he pointeth towards those commands which relate to duty, and the quickening of grace in man: it maketh a man “respect all God’s known commands;” to “live godly, righteously, and soberly:” yea and to study a right and sincere way and manner of doing things, resolving not to give over this study of conformity to

God's will, whilst he liveth on earth, but still to "press forward toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." This is true holiness, very becoming all those who pretend to be heirs of that holy habitation, in the immediate company and fellowship of a holy God; "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him."

Some may think these things high attainments, and very hard to be gained. I grant it is true. But, *first* Remember that there is a very large allowance in the covenant promised to his people, which maketh things more easy. The Lord hath engaged "to take away the stoney heart, to give a heart of flesh, a new heart, a heart to fear him forever;" he hath engaged to "put his law in men's heart: to put his fear in their heart to make them keep that law; to put his Spirit in them to cause them to keep it." He hath promised "to satisfy the priests with fatness," that the souls of "the people may be satiated with his goodness; and to keep and water them continually every moment." And if he must be "enquired to do these things unto men," he engageth to "pour out the spirit of grace and supplication on them;" and so to learn them how to seek these things, how to put him to it, to do all for them.

Secondly, For the satisfaction of the weaker, I grant this new creature, as we have circumscribed and enlarged it, will not be found, in all the degrees of it, in every gracious person. But it is well if,

1st. There be a new man. We cannot grant less; "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," and that is the new man, which all must put on who are savingly taught of 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 must be some renewing after the image of God in a man's soul

and body ; there must be somewhat of every part of the man pointing towards God. Although I grant every one cannot instruct this to others, neither discern it in himself, because many know not the distinct parts of the soul, nor pieces of reformation competent to every part of the soul and body ; yet it will be found there is some such thing in them, yea, they have a witness of it within them, if you make the thing plain and clear to them what it is.

2dly. There must be such a respect unto God's known commands, that a man do not allow peaceably any known iniquity to dwell in him ; for " what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? and what communion hath light with darkness ? " He must not regard iniquity ; " Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments. " " If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. " I grant men may be ignorant of many commands and many sins, and may imagine, in some cases, that some sins are not hateful unto God ; but supposing that they are instructed in these things, there can be no agreement between righteousness and unrighteousness.

3dly. Men must point towards all the law of God in their honest resolutions ; for this is nothing else than to give up the heart unto God, to put his law in it without exception, which is a part of the covenant we are to make with God. " This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel—I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts. " I grant many know not how to point towards God's law in all their ways ; but if it be made manifest unto them how that should be done, they will point at it. And it is true, they will many times fail of their resolutions in their practice ; yet when they have failed, they can say, they did resolve otherwise, and will yet honestly, and without guile, resolve to do otherwise, and it will prove their affliction to have failed of their resolution, when the Lord discovereth it to them, which he will do in due time.

Athly. When we are to judge of our state by the new creature, we must do it at a convenient time, when we are in good case, at least, not when we are in the worst case; for "the flesh and spirit do lust and fight against other," and sometimes the one and sometimes the other doth prevail. Now, I say, we must chuse a convenient time, when the spiritual part is not by some temptation worsted and overpowered by the flesh; for in that case the new creature is recoiled back in its streams, and much returned to the fountain and the habits, except in some small things not easily discernible, whereby it maketh opposition to the flesh, according to the foresaid Scripture. For, now is it the time of winter in the soul, and we may not expect fruit, yea, not leaves, as in some other season; only here, lest profane Atheists should make advantage of this will, we will say, that the spirit doth often prevail over the flesh in a godly man, and yet the scope, aim, tenor, and main drift of his way is in the law of the Lord, that is his *walk*; whereas the pathway and ordinary course of the wicked is sin, as is often hinted in the book of the *Proverbs of Solomon*. And if it happen that a godly man be overmastered by any transgression, ordinarily it is his sad exercise; and we suppose he keeps it still in dependency before God to have it rectified, as David speaketh, "Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling?"

Chapter VI.

The Difference betwixt a truly renewed Man who is in Christ and Hypocrites.

Object. **A**THEISTS and hypocrites may have great changes and renovation wrought upon them, and in them, and I fear mine be such.

Answ. I grant that Atheists and hypocrites have many things in them which do look like the new creature.

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First. In regard of the parts of the man, they may, 1. Come to much knowledge, as "They are enlightened. 2. There may be a reel among their affections, as, "They receive the word with joy, as he that received the seed into stony places." 3 They may reach a great deal of outward reformation in the outward man, both concerning freedom from sin, and engagement to positive duty, as that Pharisee did, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican: I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Yea, 4. In regard of their practical understanding, they may judge some things of God to be excellent; the officers said, that "never man spake as Christ."

Secondly. Hypocrites may have a great deal of profession. 1. They may talk of the law and gospel, and of the covenant, as the wicked do; "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?" 2. They may confess sin openly to their own shame, as King Saul did. 3. They may humble themselves in sackcloth with Ahab. 4. They may inquire busily after duty, and come cheerfully to receive it; "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God; they ask of me the ordinances of justice, they take delight in approaching to God." 5. They may join with God's interest in a hard and difficult time, as Demas and other hypocrites, in the Book of the *Acts of the Apostles*, who afterwards fell off. 6. They may give much of their goods to God and to the saints, as Ananias, if not all their goods; "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Yea, 7. It is not impossible for some such, being straitly engaged in their credit, to "give their bodies to be burned," as in the last-cited place.

Thirdly. Hypocrites may advance far in the common and ordinary steps of a Christian work; such as the elect have when God leads them captive. As, 1. They may

be under great convictions of sin, as Judas was: So was King Saul often. 2. They may tremble at the word of God, and be under much terror, as Felix was.— 3. They may “rejoice in receiving of the truth, as he that received the seed into stony places.” 4. They may be in some peace and quiet, in expectation of salvation by Christ, as the foolish virgins were. 5. All this may be backed and followed with some good measure of reformation, as the Pharisee, “The unclean spirit may go out of them.” 6. This work may seem to be confirmed by some special experiences and “tastings of the good word of God.”

Fourthly. Hypocrites may have some things very like the saving graces of the Spirit; as 1. They may have a sort of faith with Simon Magus. 2. They may have a sort of repentance, and may walk mournfully, “What profit is it that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? 3. They may have a great fear of God, such as Balaam had, who, for a house-full of gold, would not go with the messengers of Balak, without leave asked of God, and given. 4. They have a sort of hope, “The hypocrite’s hope shall perish.” 5. They have some love, so had Herod to John; I need not to insist, it is out of all question they have counterfeits of all saving graces.

Fifthly. They have somewhat like the special communications of God, and the witnessing of his Spirit, and somewhat like “the powers of the world to come,” powerfully on them, with some flashes of joy arising thence, as “For it is impossible “for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.” Notwithstanding of all which, they are but “almost persuaded, with Agrippa, to be Christians: It were tedious to speak particularly to each of these things, and to clear it up, that they are all but rotten ware; I shall condescend upon some few things, wherein a truly re-

newed man, who is in Christ, doth differ from hypocrites and reprobates.

1st. Whatsoever change be in hypocrites, yet their heart is not changed and made new. The new heart is only given to the elect, when they are converted and brought under the bond of the covenant; "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever. A new heart 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 a heart of flesh." Hypocrites did never apprehend Christ as the only satisfying good in all the world, for which with joy they would quit all; for then the kingdom of God were entered into them; "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." The truly renewed man dare, and can upon good ground say, and hath a testimony of it from on high, that his heart hath been changed in taking up of Christ, and hath been led out after him, as the only enriching treasure, in whom "to be found he accounteth all things else loss and dung."

2^{dly}. Whatsoever reformation or profession hypocrites do attain unto, as it cometh not from a new heart and pure principle of zeal for God, so it is always for some wicked and by-end, as "to be seen of men," or to evite and shun some outward strait, to be free of God's wrath, and the trouble of their own conscience—"Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" In testimony of this they never have respect to all known commands, else they should "never be ashamed;" nor do they, without approven guile in their own heart, revolve against every known iniquity, else they were freed of heart-condemnings, and so might justly have "confidence before God." If in

never so mean a case they did; from a principle of love unto, and of zeal for Christ, and for a right end, confess and profess him, Christ were obliged by his own word "to confess them before his Father."

3dly. Whatsoever length hypocrites advance in that work, by which people are led in unto Christ, yet they never "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness: The one thing that is necessary," viz. Christ's friendship and fellowship, is never their one thing and heart-satisfying choice, else that "better part would never be taken from them."

4thly. Whatsoever counterfeits of grace are in hypocrites, yet they are all bred there, without any saving work of the Spirit of Christ; and it is enough to exclude them from the benefit of this mark, that they are never denied to these things, nor emptied of them, but still do rest on them as their saviour, so that "they submit not unto the righteousness of God," and that is enough to keep them at a distance from Christ, who will never clout that old garment of hypocrites with his fine new linen, nor "put his new wine in these old bottles."

5thly. We may say, Let hypocrites, reprobates, or atheists, have what they can, they want the three great essentials of religion and true Christianity. (1.) They are not broken in themselves, and emptied even of their righteousness, the length of self-loathing, yet lying open for relief. Such "lost ones Christ came to seek and save." (2.) They never took up Christ Jesus as the only treasure and jewel that can only enrich, and should satisfy; and therefore have never cordially agreed unto God's device in the covenant, and so are not worthy of him; neither hath the kingdom of God savingly entered into their heart: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth; and for joy thereof selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field." (3.) They never in earnest do close with Christ's whole yoke without exception, judging all his "will just and good, holy and spiritual;" and therefore no rest followed on them by

Christ ; “ Take my yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Therefore, whosoever thou art who can lay clear and just claim to these three foresaid things, thou art beyond the reach of all atheists, hypocrites, and reprobates, in the world, as having answered the great ends and intents of the law and gospel.

Object. I am clear sometimes, I think, to lay claim to that mark of the new creature; yet at other times sin doth so prevail over me, that I am made to question all the work within me.

Answer. It is much to be lamented that people professing his name should be so abused and enslaved by transgression as many are. Yet, in answer to the objection, if it be seriously proposed, we say, the saints are found in Scripture justly laying claim unto God and his covenant when iniquity did prevail over them; as we find, *Psalms* lxxv. 3. “ Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions thou shalt purge them away.” *Rom.* vii. 23, 25. Paul “ thanks God through Christ, when a law in his members leads him captive unto sin.” But for the better understanding, and safe application, of such truths, we must make a difference betwixt gross outbreakings and ordinary infirmities or heart-ills, or sins that come unawares upon a man, without forethought or any deliberation. As for the former sort, it is hard for a man, whilst he is under the power of them to see his gracious change, although it be in him: and very hard to draw any comfort from it, until the man be in some measure recovered, and begin seriously to resent such sins, and to resolve against them. We find David calling himself God’s servant quickly after his numbering of God’s people; but he was then under the serious resentment of his sin. Jonah layeth claim to God as his master under his rebellion; but he is then ruing it, and in a spirit of revenge against himself for his sin. Next, as for these sins of infirmity, and daily incurSION and heart-ills, such as those whereof Paul doth complain it is like were.

We shall draw out some things from that seventh chap-

ter to the *Romans*, whereupon Paul maintains his interest in Christ, and if you can apply them it is well. 1. When Paul findeth that he doth much fail, and cannot reach conformity to God's law, he doth not blame the law, as being too strict, so as men cannot keep it, as hypocrites use to speak; but he doth blame himself as being carnal; and he saith of the law, "that it is good, holy, and spiritual." 2. He can say, he failed of a good which he intended, and did outshoot himself, and he had often honestly resolved against the evil which he fell into. 3. He saith, that the prevailing of sin over him is his exercise, so as he judgeth himself wretched because of such a body of death, from which he longeth to be delivered. 4. He saith that while he is under the power and law of sin, there is somewhat in the bottom of his heart opposing it, although overmastered by it, which would be another way, and when that gets the upper hand it is a delightful thing. Upon these things he "thanks God in Christ that there is no condemnation." Now then look if you can lay claim to these things. 1. If you do blame yourself, and approve the law, whilst you fail. 2. If you can say, that you do often resolve against sin honestly, and without known guile; and do so resolve the contrary good before the evil break in upon you. 3. If you can say, that you are so far exercised with your failings as to judge yourself wretched because of such things, and a body of death which is the root and fountain of such things. 4. If you can say, that there is a party within you opposing these evils, which would be at the right way, and, as it were is its element when it is in God's way, it is well; only be advised not to take rest, until in some good measure you be rid of the ground of this objection, or, at least, until you can very clearly say, you are waging war with these things. Now, a good help against the prevailing power of sin is to cleave close to Christ Jesus by faith, which, as it is a desirable part of sanctification, and a notable piece of conformity to God's will, and most subservient unto his design in the gospel, "the life which I

now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God :” and so should be much endeavored by people, as a work pleasing unto God, “ This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent :” so it is the ready way to draw life and sap from Christ the blessed root, for fruitfulness in all cases, as *John* xv. 4, 5. “ Abide in me, and I in you : as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches : he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : for without me ye can do nothing.”

Chapter VII.

Of the Special Communication of God, and the singular gracious Operations of his Spirit.

Object. I DO not partake of these special communications of God mentioned in the Scripture, and actions and outgoings of his Spirit, whereof gracious people often are speaking, and whereunto they attain.— The want of these things maketh me much suspect my state.

Answer. I shall shortly hint some of these excellent communications ; and I hope, upon a right discovery of them, there will be but small ground found for the jealous complaints of many gracious people.

First. (Beside these convictions of the Spirit of God, which use to usher Christ's way into the souls of men, and these also which afterwards do ordinarily attend them,) there is a seal of the Spirit of God spoken of in Scripture, the principal thing whereof is the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, imprinting the draughts and lineaments of God's image and revealed will upon a man, as a seal or signet doth leave an impression and

stamp of its likeness upon the thing sealed. So it is, "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." And thus I conceive the seal to be called a *witness*; "He that believeth hath the witness in himself;" that is, the grounds, upon which an interest in Christ is to be made out and proved, are in every believer; for he hath somewhat of the sanctifying work of God's spirit in him, which is a sure, although not always a clear and manifest witness.

Secondly, There is *communion* with God, much talked of among Christians, whereby they understand the sensible presence of God refreshing the soul exceedingly. But if we speak properly, communion with God is a mutual interest between God and a man, who hath closed with him in Christ. It is a commonness, or a common interest, between God and a man; not only is a man interested in God himself, but in all that is the Lord's, so the Lord hath a special interest in the man, and also all that belongs to him. There is a communion between husband and wife, whereby they have a special interest in other persons, goods, money and concerns; so it is here: there is such a communion with God, he is our God, and all things are ours, because he is ours. This communion with God all true believers have at all times, as we shall shew afterwards. I grant there is an actual improvement of that communion, whereby men do boldly meddle with any thing that belongs unto God, and do meddle with himself, as their own with much homeliness and familiarity: especially in worship, when the soul doth converse with a living God, partaking of the divine nature, growing like unto him, and sweetly travelling through his attributes, and, with some confidence of interest, viewing these things as the man's own goods and money; this we call communion with God in ordinances. This indeed is not so ordinarily nor frequently made out to men, and all his people do

not equally partake of it : and it is true, that what is in God goeth not out for the behoof of the man to his apprehension equally at all times ; yet certainly ; communion with God properly, so called, viz. that commonness of interest between God and a man, who is savingly in covenant with him, doth always stand firm and sure, and so much of communion with God in ordinances have all believers, as that their heart converseth with a living God there, now and then, and is in some measure changed into that same image : and there needeth be no doubt about any further in it.

Thirdly, There is a thing which is called *fellowship* with God, often mistaken also amongst believers. If by fellowship be meant the walking in our duty, as in the sight of a living God, who seeth and heareth us, and is witness to all our carriage, it is a thing common unto all gracious men ; they all have it habitually, and in design, “ I have set the Lord always before me.” Yea, and often they have it actually in exercise, when their spirit is in any good frame ; they walk as if they saw God standing by them, and have some thoughts of his favour through Christ : “ Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ,” If we by *fellowship* do mean a sweet refreshing, familiar, sensible conversing with God, which doth delight and refresh the soul, beside what the conscience of duty doth ; it is then a walking in the light of his countenance, and a good part of sensible presence ; and although it seemeth Enoch had much of it whilst it is said, “ He walked with God,” yet it is not so ordinary as the former, nor so common to all Christians ; for here the soul is filled with marrow and fatness, following hard after its guide, and singularly upheld by his right hand, “ My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness ; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips. My soul followeth hard after thee, thy right hand upholdeth me.”

Fourthly, There is a thing which is called *access* unto God ; and this I take to be the removing obstructions

Out of the way between a man and God, so as the man is admitted to come near. We are said to have access to a great person when doors are cast open, guards removed from about him, and we admitted to come close at him; so it is here. Now this access, in scripture, is sometimes taken for Christ's preparing of the way, the removing of enmity between God and sinners, so as men now have a patent way to come unto God through Christ; "For through him we both have an access by one spirit unto the Father." Sometimes it is taken for the actual improvement of that access purchased by Christ, when a man finds all obstructions and differences, which do ordinarily fall in between him and God, removed: God is not uncouth to him, nor as a stranger, keeping up himself from him, or frowning on him; but the man is admitted to "come even to his seat," as *Job* xxiii. 3. Of the want of this doth Job complain, *chap.* xxiii. 8, 9, whilst he saith, "I go forward, backward, to the right and left hand, and I find him not." The first sort of access is common to all believers: they are brought near by the blood of the covenant, and are no more far off, as the deadly enmity between God and them is removed: but access in the other sense is dispensed more according to the Lord's absolute sovereignty and pleasure, and it is left in the power of believers to obstruct it unto themselves, until it please the Lord mercifully and freely to grant it unto them again; so it is up and down, and there needs be no question as to a man's state about it.

Fifthly. There is a thing called *liberty* before God; and this properly is freedom, or free speaking unto God. Many do much question their state, because of the want of this now and then, since the scripture hath said—"Where the spirit is, there is liberty;" but they do unjustly confine that liberty spoken of there unto this free speaking before God. I grant, where the spirit of the Lord doth savingly discover God's will in the scriptures to a man, there is liberty from any obligation to the ce-

remonial law, and from the condemning power of the moral law, and from much of that gross darkness and ignorance which is on natural hearts as a veil hiding Christ in the gospel from them. I grant also, that sometimes even this liberty, which is a free communing with God, and "ordering of our cause before him, and filling of our mouth with arguments," is granted to the godly, but not as liberty taken in the former senses. Altho' the Lord hath obliged himself to "pour out the spirit of prayer upon all the house of David" in some measure, yet this communication of the spirit, which we call *liberty* or *free speaking* unto God, dependeth much on the Lord's absolute pleasure, when, and in what measure to allow it. This liberty, which we call *freedom* or *free speaking* with God in prayer, is sometimes much abstracted from any great confidence in the time of prayer, at least, until it draw towards the close of it; it standeth much in a vivacity of the understanding to take up the case which a man is to speak before God, so as he can order his cause: and next, there be words, or verbal expressions, elegant, suitable, and very emphatical, or powerful and pithy. There is also joined a fervency of spirit in prayer, whereof the scripture speaketh; the soul is hot and bended, and very intent. There is also ordinarily in this liberty a special melting of the heart often joined with a great measure of the "spirit of grace and supplication." So the soul is poured out before God as for a first-born. Such is the liberty which many saints get before God, whilst, in much brokenness of heart and fervency of spirit, they are admitted to speak their mind fully to God, as a living God, noticing (at least) their prayer. Sometimes this liberty is joined with confidence, and then it is not only a free, but also a bold, speaking before God. It is that "boldness with confidence, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of him. This is more rarely imparted unto men than the former, yet it is ordinary: it hath in it, beside what we spake before, some influence

of the spirit upon faith, making it put out some vigorous acting in prayer. There is a sweet mournful frame of spirit, by which a man poureth out his heart in God's bosom, and, with some confidence of his favor and good will, pleadeth his cause before him as a living God ; and this is all the sensible presence that many saints do attain unto. There is no ground of doubt concerning a man's state in the point of liberty before God, in this last sense, because there is nothing essential to the making up of a gracious state here ; some have it, some want it, some have it at some times, and not at other times, so that it is much up and down ; yet I may say, gracious men may do much, by a very ordinary influence, contributing towards the attaining and retaining, or keeping, of such a frame of spirit.

Sixthly. There is a thing called *influence*, or breathing of the spirit. This gracious influence (for of such only do I now speak) is either ordinary ; and this is the operations of the Holy Spirit on the soul, and the habits of grace there, whereby they are still kept alive, and in some exercise and acting, although not very discernible. This influence, I conceive, doth always attend believers, and is that " keeping and watering night and day, and every moment," promised : or, this influence is more singular and special, and is that same to a gracious, although a withered soul, as the " wind and breath to the dry bones," putting them in good case, and " as the dew or rain to the grass," or newly mown field and parched ground : Such influence is meant, by the " blowing of the south-wind, making the spices to flow out." When the spirit moveth thus, there is an edge put upon the graces of God in the soul, and they are made to act more vigorously. This is the " enlarging of the heart," by which a " man doth run in the ways of God : " This influence is more discernible than the former, and not so ordinarily communicated. Also here, sometimes the wind bloweth more upon one grace, and sometimes more discernibly upon another, and often upon many

of the graces together; and, according to the lesser or greater measure of this influence, the soul acteth more or less vigorously towards God: and since faith is a created grace in the soul, this influence of the spirit is upon it, sometimes less, sometimes more, and accordingly is the assurance of faith, small or great.

Seventhly. There is the *hearing of prayer*, often spoken of in scripture; and many vex themselves about it, alledging that they know nothing of it experimentally.—I grant, there is a favorable hearing of prayer; but we must remember it is twofold. Either (1.) It is such as a man is simply to believe by way of argument on scriptural grounds: as if I be fled unto Christ, and do approach unto God in him, pray according to his will, not regarding iniquity in my heart, exercising faith about the thing I pray for absolutely or conditionally, according to the nature of the thing and promises concerning it; I am obliged to believe that God heareth my prayer, and will give what is good, according to these scriptures—“Whatsoever ye ask in my name, I will do it.” “This is our confidence, that whatsoever we ask according to his will, he heareth us.” “Believe that ye receive, and ye shall have what ye desire.” “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear:” then if I regard not iniquity, I may believe that he doth hear me. Or, (2.) A man doth sensibly perceive that God heareth his prayer; it is made out to his heart, without any syllogistical deduction. Such a hearing of prayer got Hannah—“Her countenance was no more sad.” Surely the Lord did breathe upon her faith, and made her believe that she was heard: she could not make it out by any argument; for she had not grounds whereupon to build the premises of the argument, according to scripture, in the particular: God did stamp it some way upon her heart sensibly, and so made her believe it. This is but rarely granted, especially in cases clearly deducible in scripture; therefore people are much to be satisfied in exercising their faith about the other, and ought to leave

it to God to give of this latter what he pleaseth. A man's gracious state should not be brought upon debate upon the account of such hearing of prayer.

Eighthly. There is *assurance* of God's favor by the witnessing of our own spirits; which assurance is deduced by way of argument syllogistically thus: Whosoever believeth on Christ shall never perish: but I do believe on Christ; therefore I shall never perish. Whoso hath respect unto all God's commandments shall never be ashamed: but I have respect unto all his commands; therefore, I shall never be ashamed. I say, by reasoning thus, and comparing spiritual things, a man may attain unto a good certainty of his gracious state. It is supposed, "That by loving the brethren in deed and in truth, we may assure our hearts before God—And that a man may rejoice upon the testimony of a good conscience. A man may have confidence towards God, if his heart do not condemn him"—We may then attain unto some assurance, although not full assurance, by the witness of our own spirits. I do not deny, that in this witnessing of our spirits towards assurance there is some concurrence of the spirit of God: but, I conceive, there needeth but a very ordinary influence, without which we can do nothing. Now, this assurance, such as it is, may be reached by intelligent believers, who keep a good conscience in their walk. So, I hope, there needs be no debate about it, as to a man's gracious state; for if a man will clear himself of heart condemnings, he will speedily reach this assurance.

Ninthly, There is a "witnessing of God's spirit," mentioned "bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." This operation of the Spirit is best understood, if we produce any syllogism by which our spirit doth witness our sonship; as for example, Whosoever loveth the brethren is passed from death to life, and consequently is in Christ: but I love the brethren; therefore I am passed from death to life. Here, there is a threefold operation of the spirit, or three operations rather: The

first is a beam of divine light upon the first proposition, persuading the divine authority of it, as the word of God. The spirit of the Lord must witness the divinity of the scripture, and that it is the infallible word of God, far beyond all other arguments that can be used for it. The second operation is a glorious beam of light from the spirit, shining upon the second proposition, and so upon his own graces in the soul, discovering them to be true graces, and such as the scripture calleth so. Thus we are said to "know by his spirit the things that are freely given unto us of God." The third operation is in order to the third proposition of the argument, or the conclusion, and this I conceive to be nothing else but an influence upon faith, strengthening it to draw a conclusion of full assurance upon the aforesaid premises.

Now, (with submission unto others, who have greater light in the scripture, and more experience of these precious communications) I do conceive the witness of the spirit, or witnessing of it, which is mentioned *Rom. viii. 16.* "The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God," is not that first operation upon the first proposition; for that operation is that testimony of the spirit by which he beareth witness to the divinity of the whole scripture, and asserteth the divine authority of it unto the souls of gracious men: and such an operation may be upon a truth of scripture, which doth not relate to a man's sonship or interest in Christ at all. The spirit may so shine upon any truth, relating to duty, or any other fundamental truth, persuading the divinity of it upon and unto the soul, and speak nothing relating to a man's interest in Christ. Neither is the third operation of the spirit by which he makes faith boldly draw the conclusion, this witnessing of the spirit; for that operation is nothing else but an influence upon faith, bringing it out to full assurance: but that whereupon this full assurance is drawn or put out is somewhat deposed and witnessed already; therefore I conceive the second operation of the

spirit upon the second proposition, and so upon those graces, in the man, is that witness of God's spirit, that beam of divine light shining upon those graces, whereby they are made very conspicuous to the understanding. That is the witness, the shining so on them is his witnessing: for only here, in this proposition and this operation, doth the spirit of God prove a co-witness with our spirit: for the main thing wherein the witness of our spirit lyeth is in the second proposition, and so the spirit of God witnessing with our spirits is also in that same proposition. So these two witnesses having deposed and witnessed one and the same thing, viz. the truth and reality of such and such graces in the man, with our own spirit or conscience doth depone, according to its knowledge, and the spirit of the Lord doth certainly affirm and witness to be so; there is a sentence drawn forth, and a conclusion of the man's sonship by the man's faith breathed upon by the spirit for that effect: and this conclusion beareth the full assurance of a man's sonship.— It may be presumed, that some true saints do not partake of this all their days, as *Heb. ii. 14.* “And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Tenthly, I speak with the experience of many saints, and I hope according to Scripture, if I say there is a communication of the spirit of God which is let out to some of his people sometimes, that is somewhat beside, if not beyond, that witnessing of a sonship spoken of before. It is a glorious divine manifestation of God unto the soul, shedding abroad God's love in the heart. It is a thing better felt than spoken of. It is no audible voice, but it is a flash of glory filling the soul with God, as he is life, light, love, and liberty, countervailing that audible voice, “O man, greatly beloved,” putting a man in a transport with this on his heart, “It is good to be here,” as *Mat. xvii 4.* It is that which went out from Christ to Mary, when he but mentioned her name, “Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith

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unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master," He had spoken some words to her before, and she understood not that it was he: but when he uttereth this one word, MARY, there was some admirable divine conveyance and manifestation made out unto her heart, by which she was so satisfyingly filled, that there was no place for arguing and disputing whether or no that was Christ, and if she had any interest in him. That manifestation made faith to itself, and did purchase credit and trust to itself, and was equivalent with "Thus saith the Lord." This is such a glance of glory that it may in the highest sense be called, *the earnest* or first-fruits of the inheritance, for it is a felt armful of the holy God, almost wholly conforming the man unto his likeness, so swallowing him up, that he forgetteth all things except the present manifestation. O how glorious is this manifestation of the spirit! faith here riseth to so full an assurance, that it resolveth wholly into sensible embracements of God. This is the thing which doth best deserve the title of *sensible presence*, and, it is like, is not given unto all believers, some whereof are all their days under bondage, and in fear; but here, "love, almost perfect, casteth out fear." This is so absolutely let out upon the Master's pleasure, and so transient and passing, or quickly gone, when it is, that no man may bring his gracious state upon debate for want of it.

Eleventhly, There is a thing we call *peace*, about which many do vex themselves. This peace is either concerning a man's state, that he is reconciled unto God by Jesus Christ, or it is concerning his present case and condition, that he is walking so as approven of God, at least, so far as there is no quarrel or controversy between God and him threatening a stroke. Both of these are either such in the court of scripture, and consequently in God's account; or in the court of a man's own conscience. Peace concerning a man's state, as being in Christ, is sure in the court of scripture and of heaven, when a man doth by faith close with Christ and the new

covenant. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." It being sure and solid in the court of scripture, it should hold sure in the court of a man's conscience, it being rightly informed; for in that case it still speaks according to scripture: but, because often the conscience is misinformed and in the dark, therefore there is often peace concerning a man's state according to scripture, whilst his conscience doth threaten the contrary, and doth still condemn, and refuseth to assail the man, as being reconciled unto God through Christ. In this case the conscience must be informed, and the man's gracious state made out by the marks of grace, as we shewed before; and here the witness of my own spirit will do much to allay the cry of the conscience; and if the spirit of the Lord join his witness and testimony, the conscience is perfectly satisfied, and proclaimeth peace to the man.

The other peace concerning a man's present case or condition, *viz.* that it is approved of God in a gospel-sense, it may be wanting, and justly wanting, although the peace concerning a man's state be sure. This peace concerning a man's case and condition is either such in the court of scripture; and this is when a man is not regarding iniquity, and respecting the commands of God without exception: then the scripture saith, he stands in an even place, and he needeth fear no stated quarrel between God and him in order to a temporary stroke; and when it is thus, his conscience should also assail him that same way, and would do so, if it were rightly informed: but because the conscience is often in the dark, therefore a man may be alarmed with evil in the court of conscience, as if he were justly to expect a stroke from God because of his sin, and some quarrel God hath at him, although he intend salvation for him. This is enough to keep a man in disquiet, and to inhibit him the rejoicing allowed unto him, whilst he is walking in his integrity: therefore a man must here also inform his conscience, and receive no accusations nor condemnings from it, un-

less it make them clear by scripture. At that bar let every man stand, both concerning his state and his condition or case : and let him appeal from all other courts to that, and not receive any indictment but conform to the truth of God, by which the conscience is to proceed in all things. And if this were well looked unto, there would not be so many groundless suspicions amongst the Lord's people, either concerning their state or their condition, upon every thought which entereth their mind.

Twelfthly, There is the joy of the Holy Ghost : and this is when the spirit doth breathe upon our rejoicing in God, (which is a grace very little in exercise with many) and maketh it set out sensibly and vigorously ; and he exciteth and stirreth the passion of joy and of delight in the soul, so as there is an "unspeakable and glorious joy in soul," in the apprehension of God's friendship and nearness unto him. "In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This joy followeth upon peace, and peace followeth righteousness. "The kingdom of God, is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." This joy readily will not fail to be according to the measure of the assurance of faith, as 1 *Pet.* i. 8. "In whom believing ye rejoice." So that the removal of mistakes about other things will allay doubts concerning this.

Now, because some of these excellent communications of the spirit, after they are gone, are brought in question as delusions of Satan ; for vindication of them, we say, that the special operations of God's spirit in any high degree, usually are communicated to people after such brokenness of spirit ; "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice : " after so singular pains in religious duty ; "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.— And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin—the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touch-

ed me :” or in time of such suffering for righteousnes ; “ Rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings ; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ happy are ye ; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you :” or if they break in as the rain that waiteth not for man, then they do so humble and abase the person ; “ Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips—for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts :” and there are found so many evidences of grace in the man. “ The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God :” or these things do so provoke unto holiness, and to have every thing answerable and conform unto these manifestations of God : “ Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” The person under them doth so loathe all things beside God’s friendship and fellowship ; “ Peter said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here :” and these things do carry on them so much authority and divine superscription, whilst they are in the soul, that afterwards they may appear sufficiently to be special communications of God, and singular gracious operations of his Spirit, and no delusions of “ Satan transforming himself into an angel of light,” nor such common flashes of the spirit as may admit afterwards irrecoverable apostacy from God ; “ For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come ; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.”

Now then to conclude this part of the work that relateth unto trial ; I say to all these who complain of the want of the precious out-letting of the spirit, *1st*, Bless God if you want nothing essential for making out of a saving interest in Christ. God hath given unto you Christ Jesus, the greatest gift he had ; and since your

heart is shapen out of him, he will, with him give you all things that are good for you in their season. *2dly*, I do believe, upon a right search and trial, after you have understood the communications of the Spirit, you are not so great a stranger to many things as you did suspect yourself to be. But, *3dly*, Remember the promises of life and of peace with God are no where in scripture made unto these special things whereof you alledge the want: the promises are made unto faith, followed with holiness; and it may be presumed, that many heirs of glory do not in this life partake of some of these things, but are "in bondage all their days through fear of death," so that there should be no mistake about these things; we may seek after them, but God is free to give or withhold them. *4thly*, Many do seek after such manifestations before they give credit by faith unto God's word. He hath borne record that there is life enough for men in Christ Jesus; and if men would by believing set to their seal that God is true, they should partake of more of these excellent things. *5thly*, I may say, many have not honourable apprehensions and thoughts of the Spirit of God, whose proper work it is to put out the foresaid noble operations. They do not adore him as God, but vex, grieve, quench, and resist him; and many people complaining of the want of these things, are not at the pains to seek the spirit in his outgoings, and few do set themselves apart for such precious receipts: therefore, be at more pains in religion, give more credit to his word, and esteem more highly of the spirit of God and so you may find more of these excellent things.

HOW TO ATTAIN UNTO A SAVING INTEREST IN CHRIST.

PART II.

HAVING, in the former part of this treatise, put every man's state to trial, it now remains that in this following part, we give advice to those, who neither can nor dare lay claim to the marks formerly mentioned.

QUESTION II....*What shall they do who want the marks of a true and saving interest in CHRIST already spoken of, and neither can nor dare pretend unto them?*

ANSWER....If men miss in themselves the marks of a saving interest in Christ, spoken of before, then it is their duty and of all that hear this gospel, personally and heartily to close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, and this shall secure their state.

Chapter I.

Some Things premised for the Information of those who are more Ignorant.

FOR the better understanding of this we shall premise some things for information of those who are more ignorant, and then speak more directly to the thing. As for the things to be premised :

1st. The Lord did, at the beginning, out of his bounty, make a covenant with man in Adam, and did enable man to abide in that covenant : " God hath made man upright ;" but man, by eating of that forbidden fruit,

did break that covenant : “ They, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant,” and made it void for ever : “ By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight ;” and involved himself into all misery thereby : “ 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.”

2dly. The Lord did most freely, from everlasting, purpose and intend to save men another way, *viz.* by Christ Jesus, and the covenant of grace, in which he intended reconciliation with the elect through Christ Jesus, God and man, born of a woman in due time, to make this agreement effectual. And this device of satisfying his own justice, and saving of the elect by Christ, he did at first intimate to our parents in Paradise, where he saith, “ That the Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” And the Lord hath in all generations made this known to his church.

3dly. The Lord hath in all ages covenanted to be the reconciled God of all these, who by their subjection to his ordinances did profess their satisfaction with this device, and oblige themselves to acquiesce in the same, and to seek salvation by Christ Jesus, as God doth offer him in the gospel ; so all the people of Israel are called the Lord’s people, and are said to avouch him to be their God, and he doth avouch them to be his people : Yea, the Lord doth also engage himself to be the God of the seed and children of those who do so subject themselves to his ordinances. The covenant is said to be made between God and all the people, young and old, present and not present that day ; and all are appointed to come under some seal of that covenant, as was enjoined to Abraham : Not only was it so in the Old Testament, but it is so in the New Testament also. The Lord makes offer of himself to be our God in Christ Jesus ; and the people professing their satisfaction in that offer, and in testimony thereof subjecting themselves unto the ordinances, they are reckoned a covenanted people, and

are joined unto his church in thousands; receiving a seal of the covenant, without any further particular previous trial: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins. Then they that gladly received the word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

4thly. Many do deal treacherously with God in this covenant; "Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." And although they profess their estimation of Christ the Saviour, and their heart satisfaction with that device of saving sinners by him, and having the image of God restored by him in them: yet their heart is not right with God, and they do content themselves with an empty title of being in a sealed covenant with God; "Abraham is our father," say they. For although the Lord obligeth every man, who professeth his satisfaction with Christ Jesus, the devised ransom, to be cordial and sincere herein: and only to these who are so doth he make out the spiritual promises of the covenant, they only being "privileged to be the sons of God who do really receive Christ," yet the Lord doth permit many to profess their closing with him in Christ, both in the Old and New Testament, whilst their heart is not engaged: and he doth admit them to be members of his church, granting unto them the use of ordinances, and many other external mercies and privileges denied unto the heathen, who are not in covenant with him.

5thly. Although the greater part of the people do foolishly fancy, that they have closed with God in Christ Jesus sincerely and heartily; or, at least, they do, without any ground or warrant, promise a new heart to themselves before they depart this life; yet there be but very few who do really and cordially close with God in Christ Jesus, as he is offered in the gospel; and so

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there be but very few saved ; as is clear, “ Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be who find it.” “ Many are called, but few are chosen.” If people would believe this, it might help to alarm them.

6thly. Although none at all do cordially close with God in Christ Jesus, and acquiesce in that ransom found out by God, except only such as are elected ; “ But the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded :” and whose hearts the Lord doth sovereignly determine to that blessed choice ; “ No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him ;” yet the Lord hath left it as a duty upon people who hear this gospel, to close with his offer of salvation through Christ Jesus, as if it were in their power to do it : and the Lord, through these commands and exhortations, wherein he obligeth men to the thing, doth convey life and strength to the elect, and doth therein convey the new heart unto them, which pointeth kindly towards this new device of saving sinners, and towards Christ in his covenant relations ; or, it is the Lord’s mind, in these commands and invitations, to put people on some duty, with which he useth to concur for accomplishing that business between him and them : so then, it is a *coming* on our part, and yet a *drawing* on his part, *John* vi. 44 ; it is a *drawing* on his part, and a *running* on our part, *Cant.* i. 4 ; it is an *approaching* on our part, and yet a “ chusing and causing to approach on his part,” *Psal.* lxxv. 4 : it is a *believing* or *receiving* on our part, *John* i. 12, and yet “ it is given us to believe,” *Phil.* i. 29.

Chapter II.

SECTION I.

What it is to close with God's Device of saving Sinners by Christ Jesus, and that it is a necessary Duty.

HAVING premised these things, I say If men miss in themselves the marks of a saving interest in Christ, spoken of in the former part of the treatise ; then for securing their state, they are obliged, with all diligence, personally and heartily to accept of and close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, held out in the gospel.

In handling of this, we shall, *1st* Shew what it is to accept of and close with that noble invention. *2^{dly}*, We shall shew that it is the necessary duty of those who would be in favor with God, and secure their souls. *3^{dly}*, What is previously required of those who perform this duty. *4^{thly}*, What are the qualifications and properties of this duty, if rightly managed. *5^{thly}*, What be the native consequences of it, if it be performed aright.

As for the *first*, What it is to close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, held out in the gospel. Here we must remember, as we shewed before, that at first God willed man to abide in his favour, by holding fast his first integrity in which he was created ; but man by his transgression lost God's favour, made void that covenant of works, and put himself in an utter incapacity to regain the Lord's friendship, which he had lost by his sin, and to rescue himself from the curse and wrath now due to him for the same, or any way to procure his own salvation : but the Lord freely hath manifested another way of repairing man's lost estate, *viz.* by sending his Son Christ Jesus in the flesh, to satisfy his justice for the sins of the elect, and to restore in them his image now defaced, and to bring them unto glory : and he hath made open proclamation in the

church, that whoever will lay aside all thoughts of saving themselves by the covenant of works, or inherent righteousness, and will agree heartily to be saved by Christ Jesus; they shall be restored to a better condition than formerly man was in, and shall be saved. So then, to close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus is to quit and forego all thoughts of help of salvation by our own righteousness, and to agree unto this way which God hath found out; it is to value and highly esteem of Christ Jesus as the treasure sufficient to enrich poor man, and with the heart to believe this record, that there is life enough in him for men; it is to please this invention, and to acquiesce in it as the only way to true happiness; it is to point towards this mediator, as God holdeth him out in the gospel, with desire to lay the stress of our whole state on him. This is that which is called *faith* or *believing*, the "receiving of Christ," or "believing on his name." This is that "believing on the Lord Jesus Christ," commanded unto the jailor for his safety; this agreeth to all the descriptions of justifying faith in the scripture. This doth answer the type of "looking to the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness," and this is supposed in all these ordinary actings of faith to which promises are annexed in the scripture; and will be found in all who have got the new heart from God, and it will be found in none else.

As to the *Second* thing, *viz.* That this is the necessary duty of all such who would be in favor with God, and secure their souls; it appeareth thus:

1st. This closing with God's device, or believing in Christ, is commanded every where in Scripture by the Lord as the condition of the new covenant, giving title and right unto all the spiritual blessings of the same; for it is, upon the matter, the receiving of Christ. This is commanded, whilst God bids men "come and buy," that is, impropriate all, by closing with that device; The *wearry* are commanded to come unto him thus for their rest, "This is his commandment, that we should believe

on the name of his Son Jesus Christ ;” this is enough to prove it a duty incumbent. But further, it is such a duty as only giveth title and right to a sonship : for only they who receive him are privileged to be sons, “ But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”

2dly. It appeareth to be the necessary duty of all thus. — No less than this doth give a meeting unto God, offering himself to be our God in Christ ; and no less than this doth answer our profession, as we are in covenant with him, as members of his visible church. The Lord offereth to be our God in Christ ; if we do not close with the offer, laying aside all thoughts of other ways by which we may attain to happiness, we give no meeting to him. He saith, “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye him :” If we close not with the offer, we give no answer unto God. Moreover, we are all “ baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins,” now, unless we close with Christ as said is, we falsify that profession ; therefore, since this is the thing which doth answer God’s offer in the gospel, and maketh good our profession as members of his church, it is a necessary duty lying upon us.

3dly. Whatsoever a man hath else, if he do not thus close with God’s device concerning Christ Jesus, and do not receive him, it doth not avail, either as to the accepting of his person, or of his performances, or as to the saving of his soul. Men are *accepted* only in Christ the Beloved, Abel and his offering are accepted by faith ; “ Without faith it is impossible to please God ;” and “ He that believeth not is condemned already, and shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” For want of this no external title doth avail : “ the children of the kingdom are cast out, if this be wanting. The people of Israel are like other Heathens, in regard of a graceless state, lying open to the wrath of God ; “ Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised, Egypt,

and Judah, and Edom : for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart." If men do not believe that he who was slain at Jerufalem, who was called Christ Jesus, and witnessed unto by the prophets, and declared to be the Son of God by many mighty works ; I say, if men do not believe that he is the way, and close not with him as the only way, they shall die in their sins ; " I said therefore " unto you, that ye shall die in your sins ; for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

We say then, it is a most necessary duty thus to close with Christ Jesus, as the blessed relief appointed for sinners. Every one who is come to years of understanding, and heareth this gospel, is obliged to take to heart his own lost condition, and God's gracious offer of peace and salvation through Christ Jesus, and speedily to flee from the wrath to come, by accepting and closing with this offer, heartily acquiescing therein as a satisfying way for saving of poor sinners. And, that all may be the more encouraged to set about this duty, when they hear him praying them to be reconciled unto him, let them remember, that peace and salvation is offered to the people in universal terms, to all without exception ; " If any man will," he shall be welcome ; If any thirst, although after that which will never profit, yet they shall be welcome here, on the condition foresaid ; All are " commanded to believe." " This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." The promises are to all who are externally called by the gospel. God excludes none, if they do not exclude themselves ; " The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." So that if any have a mind for the thing, they may come forward, " he will in no wise cast them out," being " able to save to the uttermost them who come to God through him ;" and these who have long delayed to take this matter to heart had now the more need to look to it, lest what belongs

to their peace be hid from their eyes. But all these words will not take effect with people, until "God pour out his spirit from on high," to cause men to approach unto God in Christ; yet we must still press men's duty upon them, and obtest and charge them by the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, and their reckoning to him in that day, that they give the Lord no rest, until he send out that "spirit, which he will give to them who ask it," and cause them to know what belongs unto their peace, and bring them up to their duty.

SECTION II.

What is previously required of those that would believe on Christ Jesus.

WE come now to speak of the *Third* thing, *viz.* what is previously required of those who are to perform this duty. Men must not rashly, inconsiderately, and ignorantly rush in upon this matter, saying, they please that device of saving sinners by Christ, and will acquiesce and rest on him for safety. Often men do deceive themselves here, and do imagine that they have done the thing. We shall therefore hold out somethings pre-required in a person who is to close with Christ Jesus; which although we offer not as positive qualifications, fitting a man for Christ that way, "Come—without money, and without price;" yet they are such things, as without them a man cannot knowingly and cordially perform the duty of believing on Christ Jesus.

Beside the common principles which are to be supposed in those who live under gospel ordinances: as the knowledge that men have immortal souls; that soul and body will be united again at the last day; that there is a heaven and hell, one of which will be the everlasting lot of all men; that the Old and New Testament is the true word of God, and the rule of faith and manners; that every man is by nature void of the grace of God, and

is an enemy unto God, and an heir of condemnation ; that reconciliation is only by the Mediator Christ Jesus; that faith unites unto him, and is the condition of the new covenant ; that holiness is the fruit of true faith, and is to be studied, as that without which no man shall see God ; I say beside these things, the knowledge of which is necessary, it is required of him who would believe on Christ Jesus, *first*, That he take to heart his natural condition : and here he must know some things, and also be very serious about them ; I say, he must know some things ; as,

1st. That as he was born a rebel and outlaw unto God, so he hath by many actual transgressions disobliged God, and ratified the forfeiture of his favor : yea, a man should know many particular instances of his rebellion on all hands ; as that he is a liar, Sabbath-breaker, blasphemer, or the like ; as Paul speaketh very particularly of himself afterwards. *2dly*, The man must know that the wrath of God denounced in scripture is standing in force against those very sins whereof he is guilty, and so, consequently, he is the party undoubtedly against whom God who cannot lie, hath denounced war. A man must know, that when the scripture saith, " Cursed is he that offereth a corrupt thing unto God," it speaketh against him for his superficial service performed unto God with the outward man, when his heart was far off. When the word saith, " The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain," the man must know it speaketh against himself, who hath often carelessly profaned that dreadful " Name, before which all knees should bow," and " which his enemies do take in vain." When the word saith, " Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord negligently," the man must know that it speaks against himself, who hath irreverently, with much wandering of heart, and drowlinefs, heard the word preached ; and without sense, faith, or understanding, hath often prayed before him. When the word saith, " Woe be unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, and

putteth his bottle to him to make him drunk also that he may look on his nakedness," the man must know that it is spoken against himself, who hath gloried in making his neighbour drunk, and that dreadful wrath is determined by the Lord against him, according to that scripture. When the word saith, "God will judge unclean persons," and will close them out of the "New-Jerusalem, and they shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," the man must know that the Scripture speaketh these very words against him, he being an unclean person; so that he is the person against whom the curses of the law do directly strike.

3dly. A man must know that he hath nothing of his own to procure his peace, and to set him free of the hazard under which he lieth: because "all his righteousness is as an unclean thing. His prayers, his other service done to God, his alms-deeds, &c. are not pass-gilt before God, since they came not from a right principle in his heart, and were not performed in a right way, nor upon a right account, nor for a right end: his "sacrifices have been an abomination unto God."

4thly. He must know, that as he is void of all the saving graces of the spirit, as the true love of God, the true fear of his name, godly sorrow for sin, &c. so particularly, that he wants faith in Christ, who taketh burden for all them who believe on him. Until a man know this, he will still leave all his debt and burden, without care or regard any where else, before he bring it to the common cautioner.

Now, not only must a man know these things, as I said before, but must also very seriously take them to heart; that is to say, he must be affected with these things, and be in sad earnest about them, as he useth to be in other cases, wherein he useth to be most serious; yea, he should be more in earnest here, than in other cases, because it is of greater concernment unto him. This seriousness produceth,

(1.) A taking of salvation to heart more than any thing

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else. Shall men be obliged to seek first the kingdom of God?" is there but "one thing necessary?" Shall Paul count all things loss and "dung" for this matter? Is "a man a loser gaining all the world, if he lose his soul?" Shall this be the only ground of joy, "that men's names are written in the book of life?" And shall not men, who would be reckoned serious, take their soul and salvation more to heart than any thing else? Surely it cannot fail. Let none deceive themselves. If the hazard of their soul, and the salvation thereof, and how to be in favour with God hath not gone nearer to their heart than any thing in the world beside, it cannot be presumed, upon just grounds, that they ever knew sin or God, or the everlastingness of his wrath, aright.

(2.) This seriousness breaketh the man's heart, and fainteth the stoutness of it, and leadeth it out to sorrow, as one doth for a first-born, *Zach. xii. 10.* I grant their sorrow will better suit that scripture afterwards, when they apprehend Christ pierced by their sins.

(3.) It leadeth the man to a self-loathing. A man taking up himself so cannot but loathe himself for his abominations, whereby he hath destroyed himself. There is somewhat of that spirit of revenge, which is mentioned as a fruit of true-repentance, "This self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you—yea, what revenge!"

(4.) This seriousness doth make the man peremptory to find relief; since it is not in himself, he dare not put off and delay his business as before: and this is indeed required, that he find himself so pursued and put to it, that he flee for refuge somewhere. I grant some have a higher and some a lesser degree of this seriousness, as we shewed in the former part of this treatise: but if we speak of the Lord's ordinary way of working with those who are come to age, we say, they must very seriously take their soul's estate to heart, despairing of help in themselves, "since the whole need not a physician, but those who are sick. As for the measure, we plead only that which probably doth suppose that a man will

be induced thereby to transact cordially with Christ, on any terms he doth offer himself to be closed with.

The *second* thing pre-required of him who would believe on Christ Jesus is, he must know and take to heart the way of escape from God's wrath : the Spirit must convince him of that righteousness. Here a man must understand somewhat distinctly, that God hath devised a way to save poor lost man by Jesus Christ, whose perfect righteousness hath satisfied offended justice, and procured pardon and everlasting favour to all those whom he persuadeth, by this gospel to accept of God's offer ; " Be it known unto you therefore—that through this man is preached unto you forgiveness of sins ; and by him all that believe are justified from all things." " As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." So that no person is excluded, of whatsoever rank or condition, whatsoever hath been his former way, unless he be guilty of the sin against the Holy-Ghost, which is a malicious hatred and rejection of the remedy appointed for sinners, as we shall hear : for, all manner of sin, is forgiven unto those who accept of the offer in God's way, " He is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God through him."

The *third* thing pre-required is, A man must know, that as God hath not excluded him from the relief appointed, so he is willing to be reconciled unto men thro' Christ Jesus, and so to impropriate that salvation to themselves. He not only invites all to come, and welcometh all that come, as we find in the gospel, and commendeth those who come as the centurion, *Matth.* viii. 10. and the woman of Canaan, *Matth.* xv. 28. and chideth for not coming and closing with him, " And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life ;" and condemneth for not closing so with him, " He that believeth not is condemned already ;" but also he commandeth all to believe on Christ ; " This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus

Christ." So as a man is not to question the Lord's willingness to receive men who go to Christ honestly, for God hath abundantly cleared that in scripture. Unless that a man know so much, he will scarcely dare to lay his heart open for that noble device of saving sinners or adventure his own weight and stress upon Christ Jesus.

The *fourth* thing pre-required is, The man who would close with Christ Jesus must resolve to break all covenants with hell and death; Whatsoever known evil men are engaged into they must resolve to forego it; "for there is no concord between Christ and Belial:" The Lord requireth that they who would expect "him to be for them, should not be for another;" This is far from evangelic repentance, which I grant doth not precede a man's closing with Christ by faith: there is little here beyond a misregard of these things unto which a man was formerly devoted, and a slighting what he was mad upon, because he seeth himself destroyed thereby, and relief now offered; whereupon his heart beginneth to be more intent than formerly it was. After this, when Christ is looked upon alone, his worth and beauty doth appear, so as among all the gods there is none like unto him, and he looketh out as a sufficient covering of the eyes to all who get him: upon which the heart loveth God's device in the new covenant, and loveth to lay its weight upon Christ rather than any other way, bending towards him; and so the man becometh a believer.

Now, I will not say that all these things, whereof we have spoken, are formally, orderly, and distinctly, found in every person before he close with God in Christ; for the way of the heart with Christ may be added to "the four wonderful things," It is hard to trace the heart in its translation from darkness to light; yet we hold out the most ordinary and likely way to him who doth ask the way; debarring thereby ignorant and senseless persons from meddling, and discharging them to pretend to any interest in him whilst they remain such.

SECTION III.

The Properties and native Consequences of true Believing.

THE *Fourth* thing we proposed to speak to is, The properties of this duty, when rightly gone about. I shall only hint a few.

1st. Believing on Christ must be *personal*; a man himself and in his own proper person must close with Christ Jesus; "The just shall live by his faith," This faith, that it will not suffice for a man's safety and relief, that he is in covenant with God as a born member of the visible church, by virtue of the parents' subjection to God's ordinances: neither will it suffice that the person had the initiating seal of baptism added, and that he then virtually engaged to seek salvation by Christ's blood, as all infants do: neither doth it suffice that men are come of believing parents; their faith will not instate their children into a right to the spiritual blessings of the covenant: neither will it suffice that parents did in some respect engage for their children, and give them away unto God; all these things do not avail. The children of the kingdom and of godly predecessors are cast out; unless a man, in his own person, put our faith in Christ Jesus, and with his own heart please and acquiesce in that device of saving sinners, he cannot be saved. I grant, this faith is given unto him by Christ; but certain it is that it must be personal.

2^{dly}. This duty must be *cordial* and *heartly*; "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." A man must be sincere, and without guile, in closing with Christ, judging him the only covering of the eyes, not hankering after another way. The matter must not swim only in the head or understanding, but it must be in the heart; the man not only must be persuaded that Christ is the way, but affectionately persuaded of it, loving and liking the thing, having complacency in it; so that "it is all a man's desire," as David speaketh of the covenant, If a man be

cordial and affectionate in any thing, surely he must be so here in this "one thing that is necessary." It must not be simply a fancy in the head, it must be a heart-busines, a soul-busines; yea, not a busines in the outer court of affections, but in the flower of affections, and in the innermost cabinet of the soul, where Christ is formed. Shall a man be cordial in any thing, and not in this, which doth comprise all his chief interests and his everlasting state within it? Shall "the Lord be said to rejoice over a man as a bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride?" and to "rest in his love with joy?" and shall not the heart of man go out and meet him here? The heart or nothing; love or nothing; marriage-love, which goeth from heart to heart; love of espousals, or nothing;—"My son, give me thine heart." "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." I will not say that there is in all, as soon as they believe, a prevailing sensible love, which maketh sick; but there must be in believing a rational and kindly love, so well grounded, and deeply engaging, that "many waters cannot quench it. It is strong as death, and jealousy in it burneth as fire."

3dly. The third property or qualification of believing, as it goeth out after Christ it must be *rational*. Hereby I mean, that the man should move towards God in Christ, in knowledge and understanding taking up God's device of saving sinners by Christ as the scripture doth hold it out; not fancying a Christ to himself otherwise than the gospel speaketh of him, nor another way of relief by him than the word of God holdeth out. Therefore we find *knowledge* joined to the covenant between God and man as a requisite; "And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the

greatest of them, saith the Lord." I mean here also, that a man be in calmness of spirit, and, as it were, in his cold blood, in closing with Christ Jesus; not in a fit of affection, which soon vanisheth: "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;" nor in a distemper through some outward distress, as the people were, "When he slew them, then they fought him—and proved not stedfast in the covenant:" nor under a temptation of some outward temporary interest, as Simon Magus was when he believed, *Acts* viii. A man must act here rationally as being master of himself, in some measure able to judge of the good or evil of the thing as it stands before him.

4thly. The *fourth* is faith; as it goeth out rationally, so it goeth out *resolutely*. The poor distressed people in the gospel did most resolutely cast themselves upon Christ. This resoluteness of spirit is in order to all difficulties that ly in the way; violence is offered to these. The man whose heart is a shaping out for Christ Jesus cannot say, "There is a lion in the street." If he cannot have access by the door, he will break through the roof of the house, with that man, *Luke* v. 19. He often doth not regard that which the world calleth *discretion* or *prudence*, like Zacheus climbing up on a tree to see Christ, when faith was breeding in his bosom, *Luke* xix. This resoluteness of spirit looketh towards what inconveniencies may follow, and waveth all these; at least, resolving over all these, like a "wise builder, who reckoneth the expense before-hand." This resoluteness is also in order to all a man's idols, and such weights as would easily beset him if he did not bend after Christ over them all, like that blind man who did cast his garments from him when Christ called him. This resoluteness in the soul proceedeth from desperate self-necessity within the man, as it was with the Jailor, *Acts* xvi. 30, and from the sovereign command of God, obliging the man to move towards Christ; "This is his command-

ment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ ;” and from the good report gone abroad of God, that “ he putteth none away that come unto him through Christ,” but doth commend such as do adventure over the greatest difficulties, as the woman of Canaan, *Mat.* xv. 28. But, above all, this resoluteness doth proceed from the arm of JEHOVAH, secretly and strongly drawing the sinner towards Christ ; “ No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me draw him.”

I will not say, that every one, closing with Christ in the offers of the gospel, hath all the foresaid thoughts formally in his mind ; yet, upon search, it will be found, if he be put to it, or put in mind of these things, they are then aloft in the soul.

By what is said, it doth manifestly appear, that many in the visible church had need to do somewhat further for securing of their soul, when they come to years of discretion, than is found to have been done by them before, in the covenant between God and the church, sealed to them in baptism.

By what is said also, there is a competent guard upon the free grace of God in the gospel, held out through Christ Jesus ; so as ignorant, senseless, profane men, cannot, with any shadow of reason, pretend to an interest in it. It is true, believing in Christ, and closing with him as a perfect Saviour, seemeth easy, and every godless man saith, that he believeth on him : but they deceive themselves, since their soul hath never cordially, rationally, and resolutely, gone out after Christ Jesus, as we have said. It may be some wicked men have been *enlightened*, *Heb.* vi. 4. and have found some disorderly motion in their fear, Felix trembled, *Acts* xxiv. 25. or in their joy ; “ He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it,” and “ Herod heard John gladly ;” but not “ having engaged their heart in approaching to God,” have either sitten down in that com-

mon work, as their sanctuary, until the trial came, "When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended: or, "they return back with the dog to their vomit," from which they had in some measure "escaped by the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour," ; or they utterly fall away to the hatred and malicious despising and persecuting of Christ and his interests ; "from whence hardly can they be recovered." Which things should provoke men to be serious in this great business.

We come now to speak to the *Fifth* thing proposed, and that is, What be the native consequences of true believing. I shall reduce what I will speak of them to these two, *viz.* Union with God, and communion. *First*, then I say, when a sinner closeth with Christ Jesus as said is, there is presently an admirable *union*, a strange oneness, between God and the man. As the husband and wife, head and body, root and branches are not to be reckoned two but one ; so Christ, or God in Christ, and the sinner closing with him by faith, are one ; "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," &c. "He that is so joined unto the Lord, is one spirit." "As the Father is in the Son, and Christ in the Father ; so believers are one in the Father and the Son : they are one as the Father and the Son are one. The Father in Christ, and Christ in believers, that they may be made perfect in one." O what a strange interweaving, and indissoluble knot there !

Because of this union betwixt God and the believer, (1.) They can never hate one another. Henceforth the Lord will never hate the believer. "As no man hateth his own flesh at any time, but cherisheth and nourisheth it," so doth Christ his people. He may be angry, so as to correct and chastise the man that is a believer ; but all he doth to him is for his good and advantage. "All the Lord's paths must be mercy and truth to him." "All things must work together for good to him." On the other side, the believer can never

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hate God maliciously ; “ He that is born of God sinneth not.” For the Lord hath resolved and ordained things so, that his hand shall undoubtedly so be upon all believers for good, that they shall never get leave to hate him, and be so plucked out of his hand.

(2.) Because of this union there is a strange sympathy and fellow feeling between God and the believer. “ The Lord is afflicted with the man’s affliction.” He doth tenderly, carefully, and seasonably resent it, as if he were afflicted with it. “ He who toucheth the believer, toucheth the apple of the Lord’s eye.” “ He is touched with the feeling of their infirmities ;” “ and precious in his sight is their blood.” In a word what is done to them is done unto him; and what is not done unto them is not done unto him ; “ He that receiveth you, receiveth me.” “ In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.—In as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.” On the other part, “ the zeal of his house sitteth in the heart of the believer ; “ The Lord’s reproach” lighteth on the believer. If it go well with his affairs, that is the business of his people. So there is a strange sympathy between God and believers, all by virtue of the union between them ; because of which, men should hate every thing which would rival him in their love or affections, and should disdain to be slaves to the creatures, since these are the servants of their Lord and husband, and their servants through him. What a hateful thing for a queen to whore with the servants of her prince and husband ? It is also a shame for a believer to be “ afraid of evil tidings,” since the Lord, with whom he is one, alone ruleth all things, “ and doth whatsoever pleaseth him in heaven and earth.” “ All things are your’s, and ye are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.” “ Surely he shall not be moved forever, he shall not be afraid of evil tidings ; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, his heart is established, he shall not be afraid.”

“ Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased.”

The other great consequences of believing, is an admirable unparalleled *communion*; by virtue whereof, 1. The parties themselves do belong to each other. The Lord is the God of his people; he himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is their God, in all his glorious attributes; his justice as well as his mercy; his wisdom, power, holiness, &c. for he becometh the God of his people, as he often speaketh in the covenant. On the other part the believers are his people. In their very persons they are his, as the covenant doth speak: they shall be his people; their head, their heart, their hand, &c. whatsoever they are, they are his.

2. By virtue of this communion they have a mutual interest in one another's whole goods and money, in as far as can be useful. All the Lord's word doth belong to the believer, threatenings as well as promises, for their good; all his ways, all his works of all sorts, special communications, death, devils, even all things, in so far as can be useful; “ All things are your's; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.” On the other side all which belongeth to the believer is the Lord's; heritage, children, life, wife, credit, &c. all is at his disposing; if any of these can be useful to him, the believer is to forego them, else he falsifieth that communion, and declareth himself, in so far, unworthy of Christ; “ If any man come to me, and hate not his father—yea, and his life also, he cannot be my disciple.”

3. By virtue of this communion there should be much homeliness and familiarity between God and the believer. The Lord may meddle with any thing which doth belong to the believer, and do unto him what seemeth good to him; and the man is not to mistake, or say unto God, “ What dost thou?” except in so far as concerneth his duty: yea, he is still to say in every case, “ Good is

the word and will of the Lord." On the other part, the believer may, in an humble way, be homely and familiar with God in Christ: he may "come with boldness to the throne of grace," and not use a number of compliments in his addresses unto God, for "he is no more a stranger unto God," so that he needs not speak unto God as one who has acquaintance to make every hour, as many professors do; and it maketh a huge inconsistency in their religion.

The believer also may lay open all his heart unto God; "I have poured out my soul before the Lord," and impart all his secrets unto him, and all his temptations, without fear of a mistake. The believer also may inquire into what God doth, in so far as may concern his own duty, or in so far as may ward off mistakes of the Lord's way, and reconcile it with his word; so *Job* xiii. 15. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; but I will maintain mine own ways before him." The believer is a friend in this respect, as "knowing what the Master doth." See *Gen.* xviii. 23, &c. *Jer.* xii. 1. *Isa.* lxiii. 17.

The believer also may be homely with God, to go in daily with his failings, and seek repentance, pardon, and peace, through Christ's advocateship; "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." O how often in one day may the believer plead pardon, if he intend not to mock God, or to turn grace into wantonness! The Lord hath commanded men to "forgive seventy times seven times in one day;" and hath hinted there in the parable "of a King who took account of his servants," how much more the Master will forgive, *Mat.* xviii. 22—28.

The believer also may be homely to intrust God with all his outward concernments, for he doth care for these things; "If God so clothe the grass of the field—shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?—

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ? or, What shall we drink ? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed ? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." Yea, the believer may humbly put God to it, to make him forth-coming for him in all cases as becometh, and to help him to suitable fruit in every season, even grace in time of need." Yea, how great things may believers seek from him in Christ Jesus, both for themselves and others ! " If we ask any thing according to his will, he heartheth us. Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do. Ask me things to come concerning my sons ; and concerning the work of my hands command ye me." It is the shame and great prejudice of his people that they do not improve that communion with God more than they do : Christ may justly upbraid them, " that they ask nothing in his name."

By what is said, it doth appear of how great consequence this duty of believing is, by which a man closeth with Christ Jesus, whom the Father hath sealed, and given for a covenant to the people. It is so honorable for God, answering his very design, and serving his interest in the whole contrivement and manifestation of the gospel ; and it is so advantageous to men, that Satan and an evil heart of unbelief do mightily oppose it, by moving objections against it. I shall hint some most ordinary.

Chapter III.

Objections taken from a Man's Unworthiness, and the Heinousness of his Sin, answered.

Object. **I** AM so base, worthless, and weak of myself, that I think it were high presumption for me to meddle with Christ Jesus, or the salvation purchased at the rate of his blood.

Answ. It is true, all the children of Adam are base and naughty before him, "who chargeth his angels with folly: All nations are less than nothing, and vanity before him." There is such a disproportion between God and men, that unless he himself had devised that covenant, and of his own free will had offered so to transact with men, it had been high treason for men or angels to have imagined that God should have humbled himself, and become a servant, and have taken on our nature, and have united it by a personal union to the blessed Godhead; and that he should have subjected himself to the shameful death of the cross; and all this, that men, who were rebels, should be reconciled unto God, and be made eternally happy, by being in his holy company for ever.

But I say, all that was his own device and free choice: yea, moreover, if God had not sovereignly commanded men so to close with him in and through Christ, *Isa.* lv. 1, 2, 3. *Mat.* xi. 28. 1 *John* iii. 23. 2 *Cor.* v. 20. no man durst have made use of that device of his. So then, although with Abigail I may say, "Let me be but a servant, to wash the feet of the servants of my lord," yet, since he hath in his holy wisdom devised that way, and knoweth how to be richly glorified in it, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know—what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them;" and he hath commanded

me, as I shall be answerable in the great day, to close with him in Christ, as said is, I dare not disobey, nor inquire into the reasons of his contrivements and commands, but must adventure on the business, as I would not be found to "frustrate the grace of God," and in a manner disappoint the gospel, and falsify the "record which God hath borne of his Son, that there is life enough in him for men," and so "make God a liar," and add that rebellion to all my former transgressions.

Object. I am a person singularly sinful, beyond any I know; therefore I dare not presume to go near unto Christ Jesus, or look after that salvation which is through his righteousness.

Answ. Is your sin beyond the drunkenness and incest of Lot; adultery covered with murder in David; idolatry and horrid apostacy in Solomon; idolatry, murder, and witchcraft in Manasseh; anger against God and his way in Jonah; forswearing of Christ in Peter, after he was forewarned, and had vowed the contrary; bloody persecution in Paul, making the saints to blaspheme? &c. (but woe to him who is emboldened to sin by these instances recorded in scripture, and adduced here to the commendation of the free and rich grace of God, and to encourage poor penitent sinners to flee unto Christ); I say, are your sins beyond these? yet all these obtained pardon through Christ, as the scripture doth shew.

Know therefore, that all sins do ly alike level before the free grace of God, "who loveth freely," and looketh not to less or more sin. If the person have a heart to "come unto him through Christ, then he is able to save to the uttermost:" Yea, it is more provoking before God not to close with Christ when the offer cometh to a man than all the rest of his transgressions are; for "he that believeth not hath made God a liar, in that record he hath borne of life in the Son: And he who doth not believe, shall be condemned for not believing on the Son of God;" That shall be the main thing in his ditty; so that much sin cannot excuse a man, if he scar at

Christ, and shift his offer ; since God hath openly declared, that “ this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, Christ came to save sinners, whereof I am chief.” Even he who is *chief* of sinners in his own apprehension is bound to believe and “ accept this saying.”

Object. My sins have some aggravating circumstances beyond the same sins in other persons, which doth much terrify me.

Ans. What can the aggravations of thy sins be, which are not parallel in the forecited examples ? Is thy sin against great light ? so behaved many of these we spake of before. Was it against singular mercies and deliverances ? so was that of Lot’s and Noah’s drunkenness. Was thy sin done with much deliberation ? so was David’s, whilst he wrote the letter against Uriah. Was it against or after any singular manifestation of God ? so was Solomon’s. Was it by a small and despicable temptation ? so was that of Jonah and of Peter ; if we consider the heinousness of their transgression. Hast thou reiterated the sin, and committed it over again ? so did Lot, so did Peter, so did Jehoshaphat in joining with Ahab and Jehoram, 1 *Kings* xxii. 2 *Kings* iii. Are there many gross sins concurring together in thee ? so were there in Manasseh. Hast thou stood long out in rebellion ? (that, as the former, is thy shame : but) so did the “ thief on the cross ;” he stood it out to the last gasp, *Luke* xxiii. 42, 43. If yet “ thou hast an ear to hear,” thou art commanded to “ hear.” Although thou hast long “ spent thy money for that which is not bread,” thou hast the greater need now to make haste, and to flee for refuge ; and if thou do so, he shall welcome thee, and “ in no wise cast thee out,” especially, since he hath used no prescription of time in scripture. So that all these aggravations of thy sin will not excuse thy shifting of the Lord’s offer.

Object. In all these instances given you have not named the particulars whereof I am guilty ; nor know I

any who ever obtained mercy before God being guilty of such things as are in me.

Anfw. It is hard to condescend upon every particular transgression which may vex the conscience; yea, lesser sins than some of those I have mentioned may hugely disquiet, if the Lord blow the fire. But for thy satisfaction, I shall condescend upon some truths of Scripture, which do reach sins and cases more universally than any man can do particularly. See *Exod.* xxxiv. 7. "God pardoneth iniquity, transgression and sin;" that is, all manner of sin. "If a man turn from all his wickedness, it shall no more be remembered, or prove his ruin." "Him that cometh, he will in no wise cast out;" that is, whatsoever be his sins, or the aggravations of them. "Whosoever believeth shall have everlasting life:" that is, without exception of any sin, or any case." "He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him:" no man can sufficiently declare what is God's *uttermost*. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; that is, there is no sort of sin, whereof one instance shall not be forgiven in one person or other, "except the sin against the Holy Ghost." These and the like Scriptures do carry all sorts of sin before them: so that let thy sins be what they will, or can be, they may be sunk in one of these truths: so as thy sin can be no excuse to thee for shifting the offer of peace and salvation through Christ since "any man who will," is allowed to "come and take."

We will not multiply words: the great God of heaven and earth hath sovereignly commanded all who see their need of relief to betake themselves unto Christ Jesus, and to close cordially with God's device of saving sinners by him, laying aside all objections and excuses, as they shall be answerable unto him in the day he shall judge the quick and the dead, and shall drive away out of his presence all these who would dare to say, their sins and condition were such as that they durst not adventure



upon Christ's perfect righteousness for their relief, notwithstanding of the Lord's own command often interposed, and in a manner his credit engaged.

Chapter IV.

Of the Sin against the Holy Ghost.

Object. I SUSPECT I am guilty of the "sin against the Holy Ghost," and so am incapable of pardon; and therefore I need not think of believing on Christ Jesus for saving of my soul.

Ans. Although none should charge this sin on themselves, or on others, unless they can prove and instruct the charge according to Christ's example, *Mat. xii. 25, 26, 32*, yet, for satisfying of the doubt, I shall, *1st*, shew what is not the sin against the Holy Ghost, properly so called, because there be some gross sins which people do unwarrantably judge to be this unpardonable sin. *2dly*, I shall shew what is the sin against the Holy Ghost. *3dly*, I shall draw some conclusions in answer directly to the objection.

As for the *first*, There be many gross sins, which although, as all other sins, they be sins against the Holy Ghost, who is God equal and one with the Father and the Son, and are done against some of his operations and motions: yet are they not "the sin against the Holy Ghost," which is the unpardonable sin. As *1st*, Blaspheming of God under bodily tortures is not that sin; for some saints fell into this, *Acts xxvi. 11*. "And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme:" much less blaspheming of God in a fit of distraction or frenzy; for a man is not a free rational agent at that time: and "he that spareth his people, as a father doth the son that serveth him," "and pitieth them that fear him, as a father pitieth his children," so doth he spare and pity in these rovings; for

So would our fathers according to the flesh do, if we blasphemed them in a fit of distraction. Much less are horrid blasphemies against God darted in upon the soul, and not allowed there, this unpardonable sin; for such things were offered to Christ, *Mat. iv.* and are often cast in upon the saints.

2dly, The hating of good in others, whilst I am not convinced that it is good, but in my light do judge it to be evil; yea, the speaking against it, yea, the persecuting of it in that case, is not the sin against the Holy Ghost; for all these will be found in Paul before he was converted; and he obtained mercy, because he did these things ignorantly.

3dly, Heart-rising at the thriving of others in the work and way of God whilst I love it in myself; yea, the rising of heart against Providence, which often expresseth itself against the creatures nearest our hand; yea, this rising of heart entertained and maintained, (although they be horrid things leading towards that unpardonable sin, yet) are not that sin; for these may be in the saints, proceeding from self-love, which cannot endure to be darkened by another, and proceeding from some cross in their idol under a fit of temptation: the most part of all this was in *Jonah, chap. iv.*

4thly, Not only are not decays in what once was in the man, and falling into gross sins against light after the receiving of the truth, this unpardonable sin; for then many of the saints in scripture were undone: but further apostacy from much of the truth is not that sin; for that was in Solomon, and in the church of Corinth and Galatia: yea, denying, yea, forswearing of the most fundamental truth under a great temptation is not this sin; for then Peter had been undone.

5thly, As resisting, quenching, grieving, and vexing of the Spirit of God by many sinful ways, are not this unpardonable sin; for they are charged with these who are called to repentance in Scripture, and not shut out as guilty of this sin; so neither reiterating sin against

the Holy Ghost, although it leadeth towards it ; for such was Peter's sin in denying Christ ; so was Jehoshaphat's sin in joining with Ahab and Jehoram.

6thly, Purposes and essays of self-murder, and even purposes of murdering godly men, the party being under a sad fit of temptation ; yea, actual self-murder, (although probably it often joineth in the issue with this unpardonable sin, which ought to make every soul look upon the very temptation to it with horror and abhorrence, yet) is not the sin against the Holy Ghost. The Jailor intended to kill himself upon a worse account than many poor people do, in the sight and sense of God's wrath, and of their own sin and corruption ; yet that Jailor obtained pardon, *Acts* xvi. 27, 34 ; and Paul, before his effectual calling, was accessary unto the murder of many saints, and intended to kill more as himself granteth, *Acts* xxvi. 9, 10, 11, 12.

Although all these are dreadful sins, each of them deserving wrath everlasting, and not being repented of, bring endless vengeance ; especially the last cuts off hope of relief, for ought can be expected in an ordinary way ; yet none of these is the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost : and so under any of these there is hope to him that hath an ear to hear the joyful sound of the covenant. All manner of such sin and blasphemy may be forgiven, as is clear in the Scripture, where these things are mentioned.

As for the *second* thing. Let us see what the sin against the Holy Ghost is. It is not a simple act of transgression, but a complex of many mischievous things, involving soul and body ordinarily in guilt. We thus describe it : " It is a rejecting and opposing of the chief gospel-truth, and way of salvation, made out singularly to a man by the spirit of God, in the truth and good thereof ; and that avowedly, freely, wilfully, maliciously, and despitefully, breeding hopeless fear." There be three places of scripture which do speak most of this sin, and thence we will prove every part of this description,

in so far as may be useful to our present purpose ; by which it will appear that none who have a mind for Christ need stumble at what is spoken of this sin in scripture. See *Mat.* xii. 23—32. *Heb.* vi. 4, 5, 6. and x. 25—29.

1st. Then, let us consider the object about which this sin, or sinful acting of the man guilty thereof, is conversant, and that is the chief gospel-truth and way of salvation ; both which run to one thing. It is the way which God hath contrived for saving of sinners by Jesus Christ the promised Messiah and Saviour, by whose death and righteousness men are to be saved, as he hath held forth in the ordinances, confirming the same by many mighty works in Scripture tending thereaway. This way of salvation is the object. The Pharisees oppose this, that Christ was the Messiah ; “ And all the people said, Is not this the Son of David ? “ But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “ This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Belzebub the prince of the devils.” The wrong is done against the Son of God ; “ It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame :” and against the blood of the covenant, and the spirit graciously offering to apply these things ; “ Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who had troden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace ?”

2dly. In the description, consider the qualification of this object. It is singularly made out to the party by the spirit of God, both in the truth and good thereof. This saith, 1. That there must be knowledge of the truth and way of salvation. The Pharisees knew that Christ was the heir ; “ But when they saw the Son, they said among themselves, This is the heir, come, let us kill him.” The party hath knowledge ; “ But if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the

truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." 2. That knowledge of the thing must not swim only in the head, but there must be some half-heart persuasion of it. "Christ knew the Pharisees' thoughts," and so did judge them, and that the contrary of what they spake was made out upon their heart. There is a tasting which is beyond simple enlightening; "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have tasted of the good word of God, and of the powers of the world to come." Yea, there is such a persuasion ordinarily as leadeth to a deal of outward sanctification; "Who hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing." 3. This persuasion must not only be of the verity of the thing, but of the good of it: the party "tasteth the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," and he apprehendeth the thing as eligible. 4. This persuasion is not made out only by strength of argument, but also by an enlightening work of God's spirit, shining on the truth, and making it conspicuous; therefore is that sin called, "The sin against the Holy Ghost;" The persons are said "to have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost," and "to despise unto the spirit of grace," who was in the nearest step of a gracious operation with them.

3dly. In this description, consider the acting of the party against the object so qualified. It is a reject and opposing of it; which importeth, 1. That men have once some way at least been in hands with it, or had the offer of it, as is true of the Pharisees. 2. That they do reject, even with contempt, what they had of it, or in their offer. The Pharisees deny it, and speak disdainfully of Christ, "This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. They fall away, intending to put Christ to an open shame," The men set themselves against it by the spirit of persecution, as the Pharisees did still. They rail against it; therefore it is called "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost," They

would "crucify Christ again," if they could, *Heb. vi. 6.* They are *adversaries*, *Heb. x. 27.*

4thly. Consider the properties of this acting. 1. It is *avowed*, that is, not seeking to shelter or hide itself. The Pharisees speak against Christ publicly, *Mat. xii. 24.*— They would have "Christ brought to an open shame," They forsake the ordinances which favor that way, *Heb. x. 25.* and despise the danger; for "looking for indignation, they trample that blood still." 2. The party acteth *freely*. It is not from unadvisedness, nor from force or constraint, but an acting of free choice: nothing doth force the Pharisees to speak against and persecute Christ. They "crucify to themselves," they re-act the murder of their own free accord, and in their own bosom, none constraining them, *Heb. vi. 6.* They sin of free choice, or, as the word may be rendered, *spontaneously*, *Heb. x. 26.* 3. It is acted *wilfully*. They are so resolute, they will not be dissuaded by any offer, or the most precious means, as is clear in the foresaid scriptures. 4. It is done *maliciously*, so as it proceeds not so much, if at all, from a temptation to pleasure, profit, or honor. It proceedeth not from fear, or force, or from any good end proposed, but out of heart-malice against God and Christ, and the advancement of his glory and kingdom; so that it is of the very nature of Satan's sin, who hath an irreconcilable hatred against God, and the remedy of sin, because his glory is thereby advanced. This is a special ingredient in this sin. The Pharisees are found guilty of heart-malice against Christ, since they spake so against him, and not against their own children casting out devils; and this is the force of Christ's argument; "If I by Belzebul cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out?" They do their utmost "to crucify Christ again, and to bring him to an open shame," They are *adversaries*, like the devil, *Heb. x. 27.* 5. It is done *despitefully*; the malice must bewray itself. The Pharisees must proclaim that Christ hath correspondence with devils, *Mat. xii. 24*; he

must " be put to an open shame, and crucified again ; " they must " tread under foot that blood, and do despite to the spirit : " so that the party had rather perish a thousand times than be in Christ's debt for salvation.

The *last* thing in the description is, the ordinary attendant or consequence of this sin ; it breedeth *desperate and hopeless fear*. They fear him whom they hate with a slavish, hopeless fear, such as devils have : " A certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." They know that God will put out his power against them : they tremble in the remembrance of it ; and if they could be above him, and destroy him, they covet it ; and since they cannot reach that, they hate with the utmost of heart-malice, and do persecute him, and all that is his, with despite.

As for the *third* thing proposed, *viz.* the *conclusions* to be drawn from what is said, whereby we will speak directly to the objection. 1. As I hinted before, since the sin against the Holy Ghost is so remarkable, and may be well known where it is, none should charge themselves with it unless they can prove and instruct the charge ; for it is a great wrong done unto God to labor to persuade my soul that he will never pardon me : it is the very way to make me desperate, and to lead me unto the unpardonable sin ; therefore, unless thou canst and dare say that thou dost hate the way which God hath devised for saving of sinners, and dost resolve to oppose the thriving of his kingdom, both with thyself and others, out of malice and despite against God, thou oughtest not to suspect thyself guilty of this sin. 2. Whatsoever thou hast done against God, if thou dost rue it, and wish it were undone, thou cannot be guilty of this sin ; for in it heart-malice and despite against God do still prevail. 3. If thou art content to be his debtor for pardon, and would be infinitely obliged unto him for it, then thou cannot in that case be guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost ; for, as we shewed before, they who are guilty of it do so despite God, that they would not be his debtors

for salvation. 4. Whatsoever thou hast done, if thou hast a desire after Jesus Christ, and dost look with a sore heart after him, and cannot think of parting with his blessed company forever; or, if thou must shed with him, yet dost wish well to him, and all his, thou needest not suspect thyself to be guilty of this unpardonable sin; for there can be no such hatred of him in thy bosom as is necessarily required to make up that sin. 5. If thou would be above the reach of that sin, and secure against it forever, then go work up thy heart to please salvation by Christ Jesus, and to close with God in him, acquiescing in him as the sufficient ransom and rest, as we have been pressing before, and yield to him to be saved in his way. Do this in good earnest, and thou shalt be forever put out of the reach of that ugly thing where-with Satan doth affright so many poor seekers of God.

Chapter V.

Objections, taken from want of Power to believe, and Unfruitfulness, answered.

Object. **A**LTHOUGH I be not excluded from the benefit of the new covenant, yet it is not in my power to believe upon Christ; for faith is the gift of God, and above the strength of flesh and blood.

Answer. It is true that saving faith by which alone a man can heartily close with God in Christ, is above our power, and is the gift of God, as we said before in the premises: yet remember, 1. The Lord hath left it as a duty upon all who hear this gospel cordially by faith to close with his offer of salvation through Christ, as is clear in the Scripture. And you must know, that although it be not in our power to perform that duty of ourselves, yet the Lord may justly condemn for not performing of it, and we are inexcusable; because at

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first he made man perfectly able to do whatsoever he should command. 2. The Lord commanding this thing, which is above our power, willeth us to be sensible of our inability to do the thing, and would have us putting it on him to work it in us. He hath promised to give the new heart, and he hath not excluded any from the benefit of that promise. 3. The Lord useth, by these commands and invitations, and men's meditation on the same, and their supplication about the thing, to convey power unto the soul to perform the duty.

Therefore, for answer to the objection, I do obtest thee, in the Lord's name, to lay to heart these his commandments and promises, and meditate on them, and upon that blessed business of the new covenant, and pray unto God, as you can over them, "for he will be inquired to do these things," and lay thy cold heart to that device of God expressed in the Scriptures, and unto Christ Jesus, who is given for a covenant to the people, and look to him for life and quickening. Go and essay to please that salvation in the way God doth offer it, and to close with, and rest on Christ for it, as if all were in thy power; yet looking to him for the thing, as knowing that it must come from him; and if thou do so, "he who meets these who remember him in his ways," will not be wanting on his part; and thou shalt not have ground to say, that thou movedst towards the thing until thou couldst do no more for want of strength, and so left it at God's door: it shall not fail on his part, if thou have a mind for the business; yea, I may say, if by all thou hast ever heard of that matter, thy heart loveth it, and desireth to be in hands with it, thou hast it already performed within thee; so that difficulty is past before thou wast aware of it.

Object. Many who have closed with Christ Jesus, as said is, are still complaining of their leanness and fruitlessness, which maketh my heart lay the less weight on that duty of believing.

Anfw. If thou be convinced that it is a duty to believe on Christ, as said is, you may not shift it under any pretence. As for these complaints of some who have looked after him, not admitting every one to be judge of his own fruit, I say,

(1.) Many, by their jealousies of God's love, and by their misbelief, after they have so closed with God, do obstruct many precious communications, which otherwise would be let out to them; "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."

(2.) It cannot be that any whose heart is gone out after Christ "have found him a wilderness." Surely they find somewhat in their spirit swaying them towards God in these two great things, *viz.* how to be found in him in that day; "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:" and how to be forth coming to his praise in the land of the living." "Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live and keep thy word." "Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?" They find these two things aloft in the soul, and that is much. Moreover they shall, after search, if they judge aright, find ever such an emptiness in the creatures, which abundance of the creature cannot fill up: all is vanity, only God can fill the empty room in their heart; and when he but breatheth a little there is no room for additional comfort from creatures. This faith, that God hath captivated the man, and hath fixed that saving principle in the understanding and heart, "Who is God but the Lord? worship him all ye gods." Yea, further, these whose hearts hath closed with God in Christ, as said is, will not deny that there have been seasonable preventings and

quickenings now and then when the soul was like to fail ; “ For thou preventest me with the blessings of thy goodness.” “ When I said, My foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.” Therefore let none say that there is no fruit following, and let none shift their duty upon the unjust and groundless complaints of others.

Chapter VI.

Of Covenanting with God.

Object. **A**LTHOUGH I judge it my duty to close with God's device in the covenant, I am in the dark how to manage that duty ; for sometimes God doth offer to be our God without any mention of Christ, and sometimes saith, that he will betrothe us unto him ; and in other places of scripture we are called to come to Christ, and he is the bridegroom. Again, God sometimes speaketh of himself as a Father to men, sometimes as a Husband ; Christ is sometimes called the husband, and sometimes a brother ; which relations seem inconsistent, and do much put me in the dark how to apprehend God, when my heart would agree with him, and close with him.

Answer. It may be very well said, that men do come to God, or close with him, and yet they come to Christ and close with him. They may be said to come under a marriage-relation unto God, and unto Christ also, who is husband, father, brother, &c. to them ; and there is no such mystery here as some do conceive.

For the better understanding of it, consider these few things, 1st, Although God made man perfect at the beginning, and put him in some capacity of transacting with him immediately ; “ God hath made man upright.”

“ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat,” &c. yet man by his fall did put himself at a perfect distance with God, and in an utter incapacity to bargain or deal any more with him immediately.

2dly, The Lord did, after Adam's fall, make manifest the new covenant, in which he did signify he was content to transact with man again in and through a Mediator; and so did appoint men to come to him through Christ; “ He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him;” and to look for acceptation only in him; “ To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved;” ordaining men to hear Christ, he being the only party in whom God was well pleased; “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.”

3dly, This matter is so clear, and supposed to be so plain in the scripture, and so manifest to all who are under the ordinances, that the Lord doth often speak of transacting with himself, not making mention of the Mediator, because it is supposed that every one in the church knoweth that now there is no dealing with God, except by and through Christ Jesus the Mediator.

4thly, Consider that Christ Jesus, God-man, is not only a fit place for God and men to meet into, and a fit spokesman to treat between the parties now at variance, “ God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself;” but we may say also, he is immediate bridegroom; and so our closing or transacting with God may be justly called, *the marriage of the King's Son*, and the elect may be called *the Lamb's wife*; Christ Jesus being, as it were, the hand which God holdeth out unto men, and on which they lay hold when they deal with God. And so through and by Christ we close with God, as our God, on whom our soul doth terminate lastly and ultimately through Christ; “ Who by him do believe in God that raised him from the dead and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.”

5thly, Consider that the divers relations mentioned in scripture are set down, to signify the sure and indissoluble union and communion between God and his people. Whatsoever nearness is between head and members, root and branches, king and subjects, shepherd and flock, father and children, brother and brother, husband and wife, &c. all is here; "And they all shall be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."— So that whatsoever be spoken in scripture, people may be clear, that God calleth them to be reconciled unto him through Christ, and doth offer himself to be their God and husband in him alone: and men are to accept God to be their God in Christ, pleasing that way of relief for poor man, and to give up themselves unto God in Christ, in whom alone they can be accepted. And they who close with Christ, they do close with God in him, "who is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself." And we are not to dip further into the divers relations mentioned in scripture between God, or Christ, and men, than as they may point out union and communion, or nearness with God through Christ Jesus, and our advantage thereby.

These things being clear, we will not multiply words: but since to believe on Christ is the great duty required of all that hear this gospel, we obtest every one, in the Lord's name, to whom the report of this shall come, that without delay, they take to heart their lost condition in themselves; and that they lay to heart the relief which God hath provided by Jesus Christ, whereof he hath

made a free offer unto all who will be content of the same, and to be saved that way ; and that they lay to heart, that there is no other way of escape from the wrath that is to come, because of which men would be glad, at the last day, to run into a lake of melted lead to be hid from the face of the Lamb, whom they do here despise ; we say, we obtest all, in the consideration of these things, to work up their hearts to this business, and to lay themselves open for God, and to receive him thro' Christ in the offers of the gospel, acquiescing in him as the only desirable and satisfying good, that so they may secure themselves. Go speedily and search for his offers of peace and salvation in the scripture, and work up your heart and soul to close with them, and with Christ in them, and with God in Christ ; and do it so, as you may have this to say, that you were serious, and in earnest, and cordial here, as ever you were in any thing to your apprehension ; and, for ought you know, Christ is the choice of your heart, at least you neither know nor allow any thing to the contrary ; whereupon your heart doth appeal unto God to search and try if there be ought amiss, to rectify it, and lead into the right way.

Now, this cleaving of the heart unto him, and casting itself upon him, to be saved in his way, is believing ; which doth indeed secure a man from the wrath that is to come, because now he hath received Christ, and believeth on him, and so shall not enter into condemnation as saith the scripture.

Object. When I hear what it is to believe on Christ Jesus, I think sometimes I have faith ; for I dare say, to my apprehension, I please the invention of saving sinners by Christ Jesus ; my heart goeth out after him, and doth terminate upon him as a satisfying treasure ; and I am glad to accept God to be my God in him : but I often do question if ever I have done so, and so am, for the most part, kept hesitating and doubting if I do believe, or be savingly in covenant with God.

Answer. It is ordinary for many, whose hearts are gone

out after Christ in the gospel, and have received him, to bring the same in question again : therefore I shall advise one thing, as a notable help to fix the soul in the maintaining faith and an interest in God, and that is, that men not only close heartily with God in Christ, as said is, but also, that they “ expressly, explicitly, by word of mouth, and vive voice, and formally close with Christ Jesus, and accept God’s offer of salvation through him, and so make a covenant with God.” And this, by God’s blessing, may contribute not a little for establishing them concerning their saving interest in God.

Before I speak directly to this express covenanting with God, I premise these few things. *1st*, I do not here intend a covenanting with God essentially differing from the covenant between God and the visible church, as the Lord doth hold it out in his revealed will ; neither do I intend a covenant differing essentially from the transacting of the heart with God in Christ, formerly spoken unto : it is that same covenant ; only it differeth by a singular circumstance, *viz.* the *formal expression* of the thing, which the heart did before practise.

2^{dly}, I grant this express covenanting and transacting with God is not absolutely necessary for a man’s salvation ; for if any person close heartily and sincerely with God, offering himself in Christ in the gospel, his soul and state is thereby secured, according to the scripture, although he utter not words with his mouth ; but this express verbal covenanting with God is very expedient, for the better being of a man’s state, and his more comfortable maintaining of an interest in Christ Jesus.

3^{dly}, This express covenanting with God by word of mouth is of no worth without sincere heart closing with God in Christ joined with it : for without that it is but a profaning of the Lord’s name, and a mocking of him to his face, so “ to draw near unto him “ with the lips, whilst the heart is far away from him.”

4^{thly}, I grant, both cordial and verbal transacting with God will not make out a man’s gracious estate un-

to him, so as to put and keep it above controversy, without the joint witness of the spirit, by which we know what is freely given unto us of God; yet this explicit way of transacting with God, joined with that heart closing with him in Christ, contributes much for clearing up unto a man that there is a fixed bargain between God and him, and will do much to ward off him many groundless jealousies and objections of an unstable mind and heart, which useth affrontedly to deny this hour, what it did really act and perform the former hour. This explicit covenanting is as an instrument taken of what passed between God and the soul, and so hath its own advantage for strengthening of faith.

As for this express covenanting, we shall *1st*, shew, that it is a very warrantable practice. *2dly*, We shall shew shortly what is preparatorily required of those who do so transact with God. *3dly*, How men shall go about that duty. *4thly*, What should follow thereupon.

Asto the *first*, I say, it is a warrantable practice, and an incumbent duty, expressly and by word to covenant with God; which appeareth thus;

1st, In many places of Scripture, if we look to what they may bear, according to their scope, and the analogy of faith, God hath commanded it, and left it on people as a duty; "One shall say I am the Lord's." "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father thou art the guide of my youth." "They shall say, The Lord is my God." "Thou shalt call me Ishi:" and in many places elsewhere. Now, since God hath so clearly left it on men in the letter of the word, they may be persuaded that it is a practice warranted and allowed by him, and well pleasing unto him.

2d, *Argument*. It is the approved practice of the saints in scripture thus expressly to covenant with God, and they have found much quiet in that duty afterwards. David did often expressly say unto God, that he was his God, his portion, and that himself was his servant.

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Thomas will put his interest out of question with it, "And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord, and my God." Yea, I say, the faints are much quieted in remembrance of what hath passed that way between God and them; "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. "I cried unto thee, O Lord, I said thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living." We find it often so in the book of the *Canticles*. Now shall the chief worthies of God be so much in a duty, breeding so much quiet and satisfaction to them in many cases, and shall we, under the New-Testament, unto whom access is ministered abundantly, and who partake of the sap of the olive; shall we, I say, ly behind in this approven piece of homeliness with God? Since we study to imitate that cloud of witnesses in other things, as faith, zeal, patience, &c. let us also imitate them in this.

3d Argument. The thing about which we move here is a matter of the greatest concernment in all the world: "It is the life of our soul." Oh! shall men study to be express, explicit, plain and peremptory, in all their other great businesses, because they are such; and shall they not much more be peremptory and express in this, which doth most concern them? I wonder that many not only do not speak it with their mouth, but that they do not swear and subscribe it with their hand, and do not every thing for securing of God to themselves in Christ, and themselves unto God, which the scripture doth warrant, *Isa.* xliv. 5.

This also may have its own weight, as an argument to press this way of covenanting with God, that the business of an interest in Christ, and of real and honest transacting with him, is a thing which, in the experience of saints, is most frequently brought upon debate and in question; therefore men had need, all the ways they can even by thought, word, and deed, to put it to a point.

This also may have place here for pressing this as a duty, that God is so formal, express, distinct, and legal, to say so, in all the business of man's salvation, *viz.*

Christ must be a near kinsman, to whom the right of redemption doth belong; he must be chosen, called, authorised, and sent; covenants formally drawn between the Father and him, the Father accepting payment and satisfaction, giving formal discharges, all done clearly and expressly. Shall the Lord be so express, plain, and peremptory in every part of the business, and shall our part of it rest in a confused thought, and we be as dumb beasts before him? If it were a marriage between man and wife, it would not be judged enough, although there were consent in heart given by the woman, and known to the man, if she did never express so much by word, being in a capacity to do so. Now, this covenant between God and man is held out in Scripture as a "marriage between man and wife," *Hosea* ii. 19, 20. *2 Cor.* xi. 2. The whole *Song of Solomon* speaketh it. The Lord useth similitudes, to signify unto us what he intends; and surely this is a special requisite in marriage that the wife give an express and explicit consent unto the business: the man saith, "So I take thee to be my lawful wife, and do oblige myself to be a dutiful husband: The woman is obliged on the other part, to express her consent, and to say, "Even so I take thee to be my lawful husband, and do promise duty and subjection." It is so here, the Lord saith, "I do betrothe thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt call me *Ishi*," that is, my husband, I wilt be for thee as a head and husband, if "thou wilt not be for another." The man ought to answer, and say, *Amen*, so be it, thou shalt be my God, my Head and Lord, and I shall and will be thine, and not for another; "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." And so this making of the covenant with God is called, "A giving of the hand to him," as the word is: which doth hint a very express, formal, explicit, and positive bargaining with God: So then, we conclude it to be an incumbent duty and a very approved practice, necessary for the quieting of a man's mind, and his more comfortable being in

covenant with God, and more fully answering God's condescendency and offer in that great and primary promise, "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people."

Not only may and should people thus expressly close with God in Christ for fixing their heart; but they may upon some occasions, renew this verbal transaction with God, especially when through temptations, they are made to question if ever they have really and sincerely closed covenant with God. As they are then to put out new acts of faith, embracing Christ as the desirable portion and treasure, and also upon other occasions, so it were expedient, especially if there remain any doubt concerning the thing, that by vive voice and express word they determine that controversy, and "say of the Lord, and to him, that he is their refuge and portion." We find the saints doing so; and we may imitate them. Especially,

1st, In the time of great backsliding, people were wont to renew the covenant with God, and we should do so also. Our heart should go out after Christ in the promises of reconciliation with God: for he is our peace upon all occasions, and our advocate; and we are bound to apprehend him so, when we transgress; "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" and to express so much by word, as the saints did, in their formal renewing of the covenant.

2^{dly}, When people are in hazard, and difficulties are present or foreseen, then it were good that they should send out their heart after him, and express their adhering unto him, for securing their own heart. We find Joshua doing so, when he was to settle in the land of Canaan, in the midst of snares, *Josh.* xxiv. so David doth in his straits, "In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be over-past."

3^{dly}, When men apprehend God to be at a distance from them, and their soul to be under withering and decay, then it is safest heartily to close with Christ, and em-

brace him by faith for the securing of the soul ; and it were good to put it out of question by the expression of the thing. This is the ready way to draw sap from Christ the root, for recovering of the soul, and for establishing the heart before him. The spouse, in the *Song of Solomon*, doth so, thus asserting her interest in him when in such a condition, professing and avowing him to be her beloved, *Cant. v.*

Athly, At the celebration of the Lord's Supper men should thus cordially close with God in Christ, and speak and express so much : for that is a feast of love ; and then and there we come under a solemn profession of closing with God in Christ personally and openly, and do receive the seal of it. It is therefore becoming, at that time, to bring up both heart and tongue to second and answer our profession, apprehending God to be our God, and resigning over ourselves to be his, and at his disposing.

We shall not confine the Lord's people to times and seasons of this duty, the Lord may bind it upon them at his pleasure ; only there is hazard, that by too frequent express covenanting with God, men turn too formal in it. Therefore it is not so fit that people should ordinarily at full length renew that explicit transaction with God but rather to declare unto God that they adhere unto the covenant made with him, and that they do maintain and will never revoke nor recal the same ; and withal, they may hint the sum of it, in laying claim unto God in Christ as their own God ; and this they may do often, even in all their addresses to God. And, probably, this is the thing designed by the saints in their so ordinary practice in Scripture, whilst they assert their interest in God as their God and portion ; and it is fit that men, in all their walk, hold their heart at the business, by heart-cleaving to God in Christ." "The life we live in the flesh should be by faith in the Son of God."

As to the *second* thing, *viz.* what is preparatorily required of him who is expressly to transact with God here.

Beside what we spake before, as previous to a man's closing with Christ Jesus, we only add, *1st*, That he who would explicitly bargain with God, must know, that to do so is warranted and allowed by God, as we shewed before. If this be wanting, a man cannot do it in faith, and so it will be sin unto him; "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." *2dly*, The man must labor to bring up his heart to the thing, that it do not belie the tongue; it will be a great mocking of God so to "draw near him with the lips, whilst the heart is far off from him."

The *third* thing to be considered in this express verbal covenanting with God, is the way how it is to be performed and managed. And beside what was said before in heart-closing with Christ, I add here,

1st, The man should do it *confidently*; not only believing that he is about his duty when he doth it; but also, that God in Christ Jesus will accept his poor imperfect way of doing this duty: he doth "accept a man according to what he hath, if there be a willing mind," a mite is accepted, since it is "all the poor woman's substance;" Yea, if it can be attained, the man should believe that the issue and consequence of this transacting shall prove comfortable, and all shall be well; and that God, who engageth for all in the covenant, (since he hath determined the man to this happy choice), will in some measure make him forthcoming, and will perfect what concerns him: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it;" If this confidence be wanting, the matter will be done with much fear and jealousy, if not worse; and will still prove a disquieting business to the man.

2dly. It should be done *holily*. It is called "the holy covenant," "The holy things of David." Here it were fitting that what is done in this express transacting with God should not be done passingly, and on the by, but in some special address unto God; the thing should be spoken unto the Lord; "I cried unto thee, O Lord, I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion." It is be-

seeming, in so great a business, that a piece of time were set apart for confession and supplication before God; yea, also the person so transacting with God should labour to have high apprehensions of God's greatness and sovereignty; "Thou art great, O Lord God; for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee," although he thus humble himself to behold things in heaven and earth; and these high and holy thoughts of him will and should be attended with debasing and humbling thoughts of self, although admitted to this high dignity; "Then went King David in, and sat before the Lord; and he said, Who am I, O Lord God! and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto." It is no small thing to be allied unto, and with the great God of heaven, and his Son Christ; as David speaketh, when King Saul did offer his daughter unto him, 1 *Sam.* xviii. 22. Yea, further, there should be special guarding and watching, that the heart keep spiritual in transacting with God. There is great reason for this holy way of performing the duty; for men are ready to neglect themselves, and to shape the Lord according to their own fancy, and to turn carnal in the business, since it is a marriage transaction held out in all the ordinary expressions of love, as in the *Song of Solomon*.

The *fourth* thing we shall speak a word unto is, What should follow upon this express verbal covenanting with God. I say, beside that union and communion with God in Christ, following upon believing, if a man explicitly by word transact with God.

1st. He should thenceforth be singularly careful to abide close with God in all manner of conversation; for, if a man thenceforth do any thing unsuitable, he doth falsify his word before God, which will stick much in his conscience, and prove a *snare*. If a man henceforth neglect God, and take on him to dispose of himself, since he is not his own, and hath opened his mouth unto the Lord, "he makes inquiry after vows, and devoureth that which is holy."

adly. He who so transacteth with God should hold stedfast that determination and conclusion. It is a shame for a man, whose heart hath closed with God, and whose mouth hath ratified and confirmed it solemnly before him, to contradict himself again, and to admit any thing to the contrary; he ought boldly to maintain the thing against all deadly.

Then let me obtest you, who desire to be established in the matter of your interest in God, that with all conveniency, you set apart a piece of time for prayer before God, and laboring to work up your heart to seriousness, affection, and the faith of the duty, to make a covenant, and to transact with God by express words, after this manner.

“ O Lord, I am a lost and broken creature by nature, and by innumerable actual transgressions, which I do confess particularly before thee this day: and although being born within the visible church, I was from the womb in covenant with thee, and had the same sealed to me in baptism; yet for a long time, I have lived without God in the world, senseless and ignorant of my obligation, by virtue of that covenant. Thou hast at length discovered unto me, and bound upon my heart, my miserable state in myself, and hast made manifest unto my heart the satisfying relief thou hast provided by Christ Jesus, offering the same freely unto me, upon condition that I would accept of the same, and would close with thee as my God in Christ, warranting and commanding me, upon my utmost peril, to accept of this offer, and to flee unto Christ Jesus: yea, to my apprehension, now thou hast sovereignly determined my heart, and shaped it for Christ Jesus, leading it out after him in the offers of the gospel, causing me to approach unto the living God, to close so with him, and to acquiesce in his offer, without any know guile. And that I may come up to that establishment of spirit in this matter, which should be to my comfort, and the praise of thy glorious grace; therefore, I am here this day to put that matter out of ques-

tion by exprefs words before thee, according to thy will. And now I, unworthy as I am, to declare, that I believe that Chrift Jefus, who was flain at Jerufalem, was the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world; I do believe that record, that there is life eternal for men in him and in him only; I do this day in my heart please and acquiefce in that device of faving finners by him, and do intruft my foul unto him; I do accept of reconciliation with God through him, and do clofe with thee as my God in him; I chufe him in all that he is, and all that may follow him, and do refign up myfelf, and what I am, or have, unto thee; defiring to be divorced from every thing hateful unto thee, and that without exception, or refervation, of any thing confiftent within my knowledge, or intended reverfion. Here I give the hand to thee, and do take all things about me witneffes, that I, whatever I be, or have hitherto been, do accept of God's offer of peace through Chrift: and do make a fure covenant with thee this day, never to be reverfed, hoping that thou wilt make all things forth coming, both on thy part and mine, ferioufly begging, as I defire to be faved, that my corruptions may be subdued, and my neck brought under thy fweet yoke in all things, and my heart made cheerfully to acquiefce in whatfoever thou doft unto me, or with me, in order to thefe ends. Now, glory be unto thee, O Father, who deviſed ſuch a falvation, and gave the Son to accompliſh it: glory be to Chrift Jefus, who, at ſo dear a rate, did purchaſe the outletting of that love from the Father's boſom, and through whom alone this acceſs is granted, and in whom I am reconciled unto God, and honourably united unto him, and am no more an enemy or ſtranger: glory to the Holy Ghoſt, who did alarm me when I was deſtroying myfelf, and who did not only convince me of my hazard, but did alſo open my eyes to behold the relief provided in Chrift; yea, and did perſuade and determine my wild heart to fall in love with Chrift, as the enriching treaſure; and this day doth teach me how to

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covenant with God, and how to impropriate to myself all the sure mercies of David, and blessings of Abraham and to secure to myself the favor and friendship of God forever. Now, with my soul, heart, head, and whole man, as I can, I do acquiesce in my choice this day, henceforth resolving not to be my own, but thine ; and that the care of whatsoever concerns me shall be on thee as my Head and Lord : protesting humbly, that failings on my part (against which I resolve, thou knowest) shall not make void this covenant ; for so hast thou said which I intend not to abuse, but so much the more to cleave close unto thee, and I must have liberty to renew, ratify, and draw extracts of this transaction, as often as shall be needful. Now, I know thy consent to this bargain stands recorded in scripture, so as I need no new signification of it ; and I having accepted of thy offer upon thy own terms, will henceforth wait for what is good, and for thy salvation in end. As thou art faithful, pardon what is amiss in my way of doing the thing, and accept me, in my sweet Lord Jesus, in whom I only desire pardon. And in testimony hereof, I set to my seal that God is true, in declaring him a competent favour."

Let people covenant with God in fewer or more words as the Lord shall dispose them ; for we intend no platform of words for any person, only it were fitting that men should before the Lord acknowledge their lost state in themselves, and the relief that is by Christ ; and that they do declare that they accept of the same as it is offered in the gospel, and do thankfully rest satisfied with it, intrusting themselves henceforth wholly unto God, to be saved in his way, for which they wait according to his faithfulness.

If men would heartily and sincerely do this, it might through the Lord's blessing, help to establish them against many fears and jealousies ; and they might date some good thing from this day and hour, which might prove comfortable unto them when they fall in the dark after-

wards, and even when many failings do stare them in the face, perhaps at the hour of death; "These be the last words of David—Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." It is much if a man can appeal unto God, and say thou knowest there was a day and an hour when in such a place I did accept of peace through Christ, and did deliver up my heart to thee to write on it thy whole law without exception; heaven and earth are witnesses of it. "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope."

Object. I dare not adventure to speak such words unto God, because I find not my heart coming up full length in affection and seriousness; so I should but lie unto God, in transacting so with him.

Answ. It is to be regretted that men's heart doth not, with much force of desire and affection, embrace and welcome that blessed offer and portion. Yet, for answer to the objection, remember, (1.) That in those to whom the Lord giveth the new heart, forming Christ in them, the whole heart is not renewed; there is "flesh and spirit lusting against each other, the one contrary unto the other, so as a man can neither do the good or evil he would do" with full force. It is well if there be a good part of the heart going out after Christ, desiring to close with him on his own terms.

(2.) That there is often a rational love in the heart unto Christ Jesus, expressing itself by a respect to his commandments: "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous." When there is not a sensible prevailing love which maketh "the soul sick; I am sick of love;" men must not always expect to find this. I say then, although somewhat in your heart draw back, yet if you can say that you are convinced of your broken state without him, that you want a righteousness to cover

your guilt, and that you want strength to stand out against sin, or to do what is pleasing before God, and that you also see fulness in him ; in both these respects, if you dare say, that somewhat within your heart would be fain at him upon his own terms, and would have both righteousness for justification, and strength in order to sanctification ; and that what is within you contradicting this is your burden in some measure, and your bondage : if it be so, your heart is brought up a tolerable length ; go on to the business, and determine the matter by covenanting with God, and say with your mouth, “ That you have both righteousness and strength in the Lord,” as he hath sworn you shall do : It is approved divinity to say unto God, I believe, when much misbelief is in me, and the heart divided in the case ; “ Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.” Withal, shew unto God how matters are in your heart, that so you may be without guile before him, concealing nothing from him ; and put your heart as it is in his hand, to write his law on it, according to the covenant ; for that is the thing he seeks of men, that they deliver up their heart to him, that he may stamp it with his whole will, without exception ; and if you can heartily consent unto that, judging Christ’s blood a sufficient ransom and satisfaction for man’s transgression, you may go and expressly strike covenant with God, for your heart and affection is already engaged.

Object. I dare not so covenant with God, lest I break to him ; yea, I persuade myself, that if such a temptation did offer, so and so circumstantiated, I would fall before it and succumb : therefore, to transact so with God whilst I foresee such a thing were but to heighten my condemnation.

Answer. (1.) You have already entered covenant with God, as you are a member of his visible church ; and what is now pressed upon you is, but that you more heartily, sincerely, particularly, and more expressly covenant and transact with him : you are already obliged

heartily to close with God in Christ, and if you do it in heart, I hope the hazard is no greater by saying that you do so, or have done so.

(2.) What will you do if you shift hearty transacting with God in Christ, and do not accept his peace as it is offered? You have not a second of it in the world; either you must do this or perish for ever: and if you do it with your heart, you may also say it with your tongue.

(3.) If people may fear at covenanting with God, because they will afterwards transgress, then not one man should covenant with God; for surely every one will transgress afterwards, if they live any length of time after the transaction: and we know no way like this to secure men from falling; for if you covenant honestly with him, he engageth, beside the new heart, to put his fear and law therein, to give his Spirit to cause you to walk in his way. And when you covenant with God, you deliver up yourself unto him, to be sanctified and made conform to his will. It is rather a giving up of yourself to be led in his way in all things, and kept from every evil way, than any formal engagement on your part to keep his way, and to hold off from evil: so that you need not fear at the covenant, the language whereof is, "Wilt thou not be made clean?" And all that shun to strike covenant with God, do thereby declare that they desire not to be made clean.

(4.) As it is hard for any to say confidently they will transgress, if such a temptation did offer, so and so circumstantiated, because men may think that either God will keep a temptation out of their way, or not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear, or give to them a way of escape; "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." So the question is not, what I may do afterwards;

but, what I now resolve to do ? If my heart charge me presently with any deceit or resolution to transgress, I must lay aside that deceit before I transact with God ; but if my heart charge me with no such purpose, yea, I dare say I resolve against every transgression ; and although I think I will fall before such and such a temptation, yet that thought floweth not from any allowed and approved resolution to do so, but from knowledge of my own corruption, and of what I have done to provoke God to desert me ; but the Lord knows I resolve not to transgress, nor do I approve any secret inclination of my heart to such a sin, but would reckon it my singular mercy to be kept from sin in such a case ; and I judge myself a wretched man, because of such a body of death within me, which doth threaten to make me transgress ; in that case, I say, “ my heart doth not condemn me, therefore may and ought to have confidence before God,” if this then be the case, I say to thee, although thou shouldst afterwards fail many ways, and so perhaps draw upon thyself sad temporal strokes thereby, and lose for a season many expressions of his love ; yet “ there is an Advocate with the Father to plead thy pardon,” who hath satisfied for our breaches ; “ He we wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” And for his sake, God resolveth to hold fast the covenant with men after their transgression ; “ If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments ; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments :—Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail ; my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness”—Else how could he be said “to bethrothe us unto himself for ever ?” And how could the covenant be called “ everlasting,

ordered in all things and sure," if there were not ground of comfort in it, "even when our house is not so and so with God.

Yea, it were no better than the covenant of works, if these who enter it with God could so depart from him again, as to make it void unto themselves, and to put themselves into a worse condition than they were in before they made it: "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and I will not turn away from them to do them good"—compared with *Heb.* viii. 6. "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much more also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. "The Lord hateth putting away." No honest heart will stumble on this, but will rather be strengthened thereby in duty; *Hof.* xiv. 4. to the end, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him—Who is wise and he shall understand these things? Prudent and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them." For other ties and bonds, besides the fear of divorce, and punishment by death to oblige the ingenuous wife unto duty; so here men will "fear the Lord and his goodness."

Object. I have, at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and at some other occasions, covenanted expressly and verbally with God; but my fruitlessness in his ways, and the renewed jealousies of my gracious state, maketh me question if ever I transacted with God in sincerity, and I think I can do it no otherwise than I have done it.

Answer. (1.) Men are not to expect fruitfulness according to their desire, nor full assurance of God's favour immediately after they have fled unto Christ, and expressly transacted with God in him: these things will keep a man on work all his days. The saints had their failings and shortcomings, yea, and backslidings, with many fits of dangerous misbelief, after they had very

seriously and sincerely, and expressly closed with God, as their God in Christ.

(2.) Many do look for fruitfulness in their walk and establishment of faith from their own sincerity in transacting with God rather than from the spirit of the Lord Jesus. They fixed their heart in their own honesty and resolutions, and not in the blessed root Christ Jesus, without whom we can do nothing, and are vanity altogether in our best estate. Men should remember, that one piece of grace cannot produce any degree of grace; further nothing can work grace but the arm of JEHOVAH and if men could lean upon Christ, and covenant with him as their duty absolutely, whatsoever may be the consequence, at least, looking only to him for the suitable fruit, it should fare better with them. God pleaseth not that men should betake themselves unto Christ, and covenant with him for a season, until they see if such fruit and establishment shall follow, purposing to disclaim their interest in him and the covenant, if such and such fruit does not appear within such a length of time. This is to put the ways of God to trial, and is very displeasing unto him. Men must absolutely close with Christ, and covenant with him resolving to maintain these things as their duty, and a ready way to reach fruit, whatsoever shall follow thereupon; they having a testimony within them, that they seriously design conformity to his revealed will in all things; and that they have closed covenant with him for the same end, as well as to be saved thereby.

(3.) Men should be sparing to bring in question their sincerity in transacting with God, unless they can instruct the same, or have great presumptions for it. If you can instruct any deceit or guile in your transacting with him you are obliged to disclaim and rectify it, and to transact with God honestly and without guile: but if you know nothing of your deceit or guile in the day you did transact with him; Yea, if you can say, that you did appeal unto God in that day that you dealt honestly

with him, and intended not to deceive ; and did obtest him, according to his faithfulness, to search and try if there was any crookedness in your way, and to discover it unto you, and heal it ; “ Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts : and see if there be any wicked way in me ; and lead me in the way everlasting ; and that afterwards you “ came to the light, that your deeds might be manifest ;” and if you can say, that God’s answers from his word to you, in so far as you could understand, were answers of peace, and confirmations of your sincerity ; yea, further, if you dare say, that if upon life and death you were again to transact with him, you can do it no other way, nor intend more sincerity and seriousness than before ; then I dare say unto thee, in the Lord’s name, thou ought not to question thy sincerity in transacting with God, but to “ have confidence before God, since thy heart doth not condemn thee ;” and thou art bound to believe that “ God dealeth uprightly with the upright man, and with the pure doth shew himself pure.” If a man intend honesty, God will not suffer him to beguile himself ; yea, the Lord suffereth no man to deceive himself, unless the man intend to deceive both God and men.

(4.) Therefore impute your unfruitfulness to your unwatchfulness and your misbelief, and impute your want of full assurance unto an evil heart of unbelief, helped by Satan to act against the glorious free grace of God ; and charge not these things upon want of sincerity in your closing with Christ. And resolve henceforth to abide close by the root, and you shall bring forth more fruit ; and by much fruit you lay yourself open to the witness of God’s Spirit, which will testify with your spirit that you have sincerely and honestly closed with God, and that the rest of your works are wrought in God, and approved of him ; and so the witness of the spirit and the water joining with the blood, whereupon you are to lay the weight of your soul and conscience, and where alone you are to sink the curses of the law due unto you

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for all your sins, and failings in your best things : these three do agree in one, *viz.* that this is the way of life and peace, and that you have interest therein, and so you come to quietness and full assurance ; “ Abide in me, and I in you : as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches ; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit ; for without me ye can do nothing.” “ He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. If a man love me, he will keep my words ; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” “ There are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood ; and these three agree in one.”

O blessed bargain of the new covenant, and thrice blessed Mediator of the same ! Let him ride prosperously, and subdue nations and languages, and gather in all his jewels, that honorable company of the first-born, that stately troop of kings and priests, whose glory it shall be to have washed their garments in the blood of that spotless Lamb, and whose happiness shall continually flourish in following him whithersoever he goeth, and in being in the immediate company of the Ancient of days, one sight of whose face shall make them in a manner forget that ever they were in the earth. Oh if I could persuade men to believe that these things are not *yea* and *ay*, and to make haste towards him, who hasteth to judge the world, and to call men to an account, especially concerning their improvement of this gospel. “ Even so, come Lord Jesus.”

THE
SPIRITUAL STEWARD.

O.K. ✓

A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED

AT THE MEETING OF

THE ASSOCIATE REFORMED SYNOD,

IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK,

OCTOBER 21, 1802.

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER PROUDFIT,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, SALEM.

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EXF.

1. Clergy - Duty and life

P R E F A C E.

THE following discourse, with a very few additions and alterations, makes its appearance from the press precisely as it was delivered from the pulpit. It would be vanity the most inexcusable in the Author, to affect throwing any light on the duties of the ministerial office, which have been so frequently and so fully discussed by persons of maturer age, of greater experience, and whose situation in life opens larger sources of information on this and every other subject. In the providence of God he was called to preach on that public occasion; and at the repeated request of some, whose judgment he ought to respect, he ventures the sermon to the world. The author trusts, that it may occasionally serve at least as a monitor to himself, and through the blessing of that sovereign God, who makes foolish things to confound the wise, and weak things to confound the mighty, may not be altogether unprofitable to fellow laborers in the vineyard of Jehovah.

All who are in the least degree versed in the history of the church; who are acquainted with her

prosperities and adversities, and the causes which produced them, must be impressed with the unutterable importance of her ministry. On the prudence of the ambassadors of Jesus, their patience, their self-denial, their fervent zeal, their deep acquaintance with the mysteries of the kingdom, and their holy heroism in defending them, depend intimately, under God, the success and the glory of christianity. They are in scripture emphatically represented under the emblem of stars; and if they are obscured, either by ignorance or error, a general darkness must envelope the horizon of the church. Natural talents and human learning are little noticed in the following character of the gospel steward; because however important these qualifications are, they are of inferior importance; they become useful and ornamental, precisely in proportion as they are sanctified by the spirit of Jesus, and consecrated to the service of his cross. If those who bear the vessels of the Lord be erroneous, the more successful they are, the more dangerous, by rendering others tenfold more the children of darkness than formerly. If they appear indolent and indifferent, their example fosters carelessness in their hearers, and tends to lull them deeper and deeper in the slumbers of perdition. The ordinary Pastor, no less than the extraordinary Apostle, should he possess all knowledge and all mysteries,

yet, without charity, must become *as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal*. Intellectual endowments, unaccompanied by divine grace, like the blazing comet, may dazzle and astonish, while he who endures all things for the elect's sake, like the sun in the firmament, exhilarates and cherishes as he shines.

If the present discourse is made instrumental, in impressing a single ambassador of Jesus with more becoming conceptions of the importance of his office, or of awakening one to greater industry, greater importunity in discharging the duties of his office, the author will consider himself more than rewarded; and would now, and eternally, ascribe all to the glory of that sovereignty, which out of *the mouth of babes and sucklings* has perfected strength.

SALEM, December 24, 1802.

THE
SPIRITUAL STEWARD.

1 COR. IV. 1.—“*Stewards of the mysteries of God.*”

THE grace and sovereignty of Jehovah illustriously shine in our redemption, through the cross of Immanuel. It is a manifestation of grace the most marvellous, the most glorious, that any of our family should be restored; that after our wilful apostacy from the government of God, and rebellion against his crown, we should be reinstated in his favor, dignified with the name and distinguished with the inheritance of sons. It excites admiration in the highest, that our recovery should be accomplished by a plan so peculiar, a scheme so costly, as the substitution and death of his *only begotten, eternally beloved Son*. “*Herein is love: Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*”

Sovereignty also mingles her glories with those of grace, in every part of this wondrous dispensation. While grace displays her exceeding riches

in the salvation of any, sovereignty shines mysterious and awful in determining the objects of this salvation ; in choosing some to adoption, to reconciliation, to eternal life ; while others of the same nation, of the same society, of the same family, under the same opportunities of instruction, under the same offers of mercy, are utterly passed by ; are delivered up to *blindness of mind, hardness of heart*, to a rejection of Jesus, the only sacrifice for sin, as a pledge of eternal condemnation hereafter.

Jehovah appears no less an adorable sovereign, in the very instruments by whom this redemption is applied to *the election of grace*. Whom does he usually raise up and employ for this important purpose ? Does he fasten upon the unfinning angels, those exalted spirits who bask in the glories of his throne, whose larger capacities qualify them for understanding more fully, and unfolding more perfectly, the mysteries of redemption ? No ; their apostate tribes are not chosen to be the blessed partakers of this salvation ; neither are their unfinning tribes honored to be instrumental in applying it. What rank of the human *family* is ordinarily employed for promoting the kingdom of *Jesus*, and applying to the souls of others the reconciliation of his cross ? Does the living God raise up some preternatural order, persons superior to their fellow-creatures, naturally distinguished by purer morals,

by a more comprehensive understanding or commanding utterance? No; was this the plan pursued by the Eternal, the success of his gospel would probably be ascribed to the excellence of the instruments employed. The vessel naturally most frail, most foul, debased by every species of open and gross abomination, has frequently been purified, and appointed to contain this immortal treasure. “*Base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, that no flesh should glory in his presence.*” He ordinarily uses instruments the most insignificant, seemingly the most unequal to the work, that his own wisdom, and power, and sovereignty, may more visibly be traced in every part of the dispensation. A few fishermen, persons of low occupation in life, unlearned in the sciences, and unskilled in the policies of this world, were selected as the usual companions of our Lord; and their preaching, afterwards, was the great engine of spreading his gospel among the nations of the earth. Saul, once a malignant *persecutor*, a man *injurious* to the Redeemer’s cause, who had uttered the foulest blasphemies against the Saviour’s cross; this very Saul is converted and rendered the chief apostle of this very cross; glories in it as his only salvation; proclaims it as the only hope of perishing sinners. “*We have this treasure,*” he exclaims, adoring equally the depth of divine condescension

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and sovereignty—"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are stewards of the mysteries of God."

The term *mysteries*, here used by the apostle, occurs very frequently in the volume of divine inspiration. Without enquiring particularly into its real origin, or usual signification, it may be sufficient to remark, that *mysteries*, as employed in the sacred oracles, generally imply those truths which our reason, unassisted by revelation, could never have discovered; and which, after they are revealed, our finite, contracted understandings, are incapable fully to comprehend. The mysteries committed to the ministers of reconciliation, simply imply the everlasting gospel; all those doctrines, all that discipline; those seals of the covenant also, which are employed by the adorable head of the church, for the instruction, the correction and edification of his spiritual household.

The persons entrusted with these mysteries are denominated *stewards*. There is an evident allusion to a practice which prevailed in early periods of the world; particularly in the families of the opulent and honorable. A person of known integrity and talents was chosen, to whom, under the char-

acter of a *steward*, the proprietor of the house committed the immediate disposal of his goods, and management of his family ; accountable, however, in all respects, to him by whom he was appointed to this stewardship. We read in sacred history, of a steward in the family of Abraham, in the family of Joseph, in the families of particular kings of Israel and Chaldea. This character is frequently applied to the ministers of reconciliation, and expresses the great importance and awful responsibility of their office. By Jesus Jehovah, the supreme Ruler and Lawgiver of the divine house, they are now entrusted with the treasure of the gospel. This they are required to dispense to his family on earth, as they must answer hereafter, *at his appearing and kingdom.*

The pertinency of the subject to the present occasion, is abundantly obvious. We are ordinarily employed in illustrating and enforcing the duty of others, as men : It is more appropriate, at present, to illustrate and apply our own obligations as ministers. May the unction of the Holy One liberally descend, and influence every heart, while we attempt—

I. To enumerate a few of those mysteries which are contained in the gospel : And,

II. Illustrate the character and obligations of those to whom these mysteries are entrusted : *Stewards*—Stewards of the mysteries of God.

1. The Trinity in Jehovah, may be numbered among the mysteries of the gospel : Three adorable persons, necessarily, essentially, eternally *equal* ;—*ONE* in essence, *ONE* in perfection and glory. This doctrine was revealed obscurely in the Old Testament ; but is taught with greater perspicuity and glory in the New. The apostle speaks of "*the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.*" An evangelist announces, that "*there be Three which bare record in heaven ; the Father, and the Word, and the Holy Ghost : These Three are One.*" This truth is taught, not barely as a subject of speculation to the understanding, but a source of rich, unutterable consolation to the heart. The believer in Jesus is privileged to enjoy real, distinct communion with each of the adorable Three ; with the Father in his love ; with the Son in his grace ; with the Holy Ghost in his sanctifying, comforting influences. It constitutes the privilege, and security, and glory, of each heir of salvation, that he is "*electèd according to the foreknowledge of God, the Father, through sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ ;*" and that once electèd, and sanctified, and justified, he shall be infallibly and everlastingly glorified.

2. The incarnation of the eternal Son, is another mystery of the ever glorious gospel. "*Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God manifested in the flesh.*" His assumption of our nature, appropriating our guilt, suffering in our room, bringing in everlasting righteousness for our reconciliation, forms an essential, a most interesting part of that heavenly treasure committed to our trust; and ought to constitute *the Alpha and Omega* of every administration, whether public or private.— From Jesus and his cross, all the revelation of God derives its meaning, its value and glory. There the law of Moses, with its costly observances, the predictions of prophets, and the preaching of apostles, all meet, as their common centre. For Messiah's appearance in the flesh, and his accomplishment of our redemption, believers under the Old Testament looked forward with anxious expectation; and to these events, the ransomed, through eternity, will look back with adoring gratitude: They will be ever acknowledging this *decease, accomplished at Jerusalem*, as the foundation of all they expected on earth, and all they experience in heaven. In Christ, and him crucified, all the perfections of Deity are glorified to the very uttermost: The law is magnified in its precept, vindicated in its penalty; the injuries of justice repaired; the offence of holiness removed; while mercy, grace and condescension

shine with unparalleled lustre. Through Christ, and him crucified, all the wants of the sinner are supplied. By the blood of his covenant, sprinkled upon the conscience, the vilest of the vile *are purged from dead works*. Through his righteousness imputed, they are completely and eternally justified in the sight of Jehovah; and by his grace, shed abroad through their hearts, they are sanctified and prepared for the inheritance of immortality. So important, so glorious is this mystery, the Son of God incarnate, and suffering for our sins, that patriarchs *rejoiced*, leaped up, *to see his day afar off*; prophets enquired diligently, *who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow*; apostles determined to know *nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified*; angels look into it, with ever new, ever increasing admiration.

3. The regeneration and sanctification of the sinner, by the eternal Spirit, is another mystery, with which, as stewards in the family of Jesus, we are entrusted. The apostle, therefore, pronounces it not only a *mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh*, but *believed on in the world*, and speaks in another epistle of the *mystery of faith*. This grace, which unites the sinner to the Saviour, and interests him in the *great salvation*, is effected in a manner utterly inconceivable to us. Although the

change produced in the soul, at its translation from death to life, is abundantly obvious ; new fears, new desires, new joys, new hopes, instantly spring up ; yet the manner by which this change is produced is altogether mysterious, utterly unsearchable by us. “ *The wind bloweth where it listeth ; we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*” Who can conceive or describe that gracious influence, by which the understanding, once dark, is now enlightened ; the will once stubborn, is now subdued *to the obedience of faith* ; the affections, formerly sensual and earthly, are now elevated to things spiritual and divine ; the whole man transformed, translated from death to life, from corruption to holiness, from things temporal to things eternal. The believer himself, although the favored subject of this sanctifying Spirit, is unable to trace the manner of his operations. He can, however, maintain, and maintain with a confidence which all the sophistry of earth or hell shall never be able to overthrow, “ *whereas I was blind, now I see.*” I discover new excellencies and glories in the Saviour, new wisdom and condescension in the method of reconciliation through his obedience and cross, new sweetness and preciousness in the promises, new suitableness and sufficiency in

the everlasting covenant. These are *all my salvation, and all my desire.*

4. To these we may add, the resurrection of the body ; the awards of the general judgment ; the adjudication of the righteous to endless life, of the wicked to endless perdition ; as other mysteries of the gospel committed to our charge. The manner by which the resurrection from the dead will be effected ; the particular body in which they shall appear ; the part of the universe where all the nations, when raised, shall be placed ; the procedure of the great Judge in determining their unalterable doom ; the instrumentality of elect angels in raising the dead, in arranging them for judgment, in conducting the righteous to mansions of bliss, and hurrying the damned to their gloomy abodes, are inconceivable to us. "*Behold,*" says the apostle, "*behold I shew you a mystery : We shall not all sleep ; but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump : For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed : For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*"

These are a part of those mysteries, with which, as stewards of the kingdom, we are solemnly entrusted. These it becomes us to dispense,

without reserve, without partiality, without hypocrisy, to that house over which *the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers.*

Having attempted briefly to enumerate these mysteries, we proceed—

II. To illustrate the character and obligation of those to whom they are committed: *Stewards—Stewards of the mysteries of God.*

1. The steward is freely elected and appointed by the proprietor of the house. He who daringly rushes into the family of another, and takes possession of his property without a regular invitation, is chargeable equally with presumption and folly. He can neither ask the present support of his master, nor afterwards expect a reward from his hand. Equally necessary is it that the minister of reconciliation be divinely chosen to that office; that he be duly called by Jesus Jehovah, the great master of the spiritual house. No emergence of the church, however peculiar; no necessity for laborers, however pressing; no advantages arising from natural talents, from the aids of education, or other considerations, can justify any in assuming the ministerial office, unless lawfully called. The sovereign Lord

C

of the house, jealous of his royal prerogatives; meets the intruder with that heart rending challenge—“*Who hath required this at your hand ?*” and writes his presumption in his punishment—“*I have not sent him, nor commanded him : Therefore he shall not profit this people at all. No man taketh this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.*” Let us pause a moment, and impartially enquire—Are we sent and appointed of the Lord God to this stewardship? Have we been careful to make *sure* our *calling and election*, not only as men, but as ministers? This question intimately concerns the glory of that Jesus whom we serve; the dignity of that cause in which we are embarked; the edification of that church which we are appointed to oversee; our own peace, and confidence, and triumph, as individuals. How would it support in the hour of difficulty; how would it embolden in the discharge of every duty, could we carry our commission in our hand, and with the prophet confidently proclaim—“*The Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me.*” Then might we daily look up to our master, for strength proportioned to our daily cross, and expect his blessing on those labors which we perform in obedience to his command.

A full, formal enquiry, into the nature of this call to the ministerial office, is not intended at pres-

ent. It may not, however, be impertinent to remark, that he who is divinely chosen to this work, will experience the love of Jehovah the Redeemer, kindling in his heart. He will feel this heavenly flame burning up the dross of self-ease, self-interest, self-promotion. He will be constrained by a holy, an irresistible necessity, *to preach the gospel; to spend, and to be spent; to occupy his time, his talents, in promoting the kingdom of that Jesus who bought us with his blood. His bosom will occasionally melt with tender compassion towards his brethren, by nature, who are in danger of perishing eternally. He will cheerfully renounce each worldly prospect, his temporal ease and indulgence, nay, life itself, to become instrumental in rescuing them from never ending ruin. Animated with the same spirit, he will burst forth in the exclamation of the great apostle—“I endure all things for the elect’s sake, that they may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.”*

2. The steward acting agreeably to his station, aims at adapting himself to the varied circumstances of the household. He endeavors to dispense that portion which is most suited to their peculiar age and necessities. This will equally be the concern of each steward in the heavenly family, who has imbibed the spirit of his office. This is called in scrip-

ture, "*rightly dividing the word of truth ; giving to every one their portion of meat in due season ;*" and may with propriety be pronounced the most difficult part of ministerial duty. Much diligence is requisite for knowing the state of *our flock* ; and much discernment for accommodating our public administrations to their respective capacities. Some are ignorant, and require instruction ; others are secure, and ought to be alarmed ; others are presumptuous, and require to be shaken from their unscriptural confidences. The weak need to be strengthened ; the wavering to be confirmed ; the wandering to be restored ; the fearful to be emboldened ; the drooping to be supported, with the consolations of the covenant.

Could no other argument be adduced, this abundantly evinces the propriety of a stationary ministry, and of each minister familiarly visiting and conversing with his flock. The physician must examine his patient, before he can administer his medicine with judgment : The vine-dresser must go from tree to tree, before he knows whether to dig around and dung, or with a pruning-knife to lop off the exuberant branch : The teacher must enquire into the age of the scholar, his ability, his progress in learning, before he can judiciously direct his future studies. Thus he who would approve himself faithful

to his adorable master, or become successful in the salvation of souls, must diligently, must painfully enquire into their scriptural condition.

Bear with me, respected Fathers and Brethren, if I take the liberty of enlarging on this duty ; because it is scarcely more important than unfashionable ; and probably the languor of living godliness in our churches, the rare instances of conversion under our administrations, may be ascribed partly, if not principally, to this neglect. We are not capable rightly to divide the word of truth ; to dispense in public the mysteries of the kingdom, according to the circumstances of the family ; because we are not more employed in private conversing with the family, enquiring into their various exercises, their anxieties, their doubts, their discouragements.—Consequences the most glorious attended the revival of this primitive practice in Geneva, under the ministry of Calvin, and in various other places, at the commencement of the reformation. While ministers, with their ruling elders, industriously went around from house to house ; while they carried their appeal immediately to the sinner's conscience, *teaching every man, and warning every man*, their labors became eminently successful : The ignorant were instructed ; the secure alarmed ; the weak, the despondent, strengthened and edified.

3. The steward endeavors to manifest forbearance with the members of the house. Concern for the interests of his lord, induces him to exercise patience, not only with the weakness, but even the wickedness of those committed to his charge. A disposition, this, of difficult attainment ; yet indispensibly requisite in the minister of reconciliation. Numerous insults, much derision, must be expected. Those who are at ease will frequently deride our admonitions as impertinent ; as only calculated to ruffle their repose. The drunkard will revile us as unnecessarily precise ; as unfriendly to human happiness. The impure will attempt justifying themselves, by the backslidings of Lot, of David, and other eminent faints. The swearer will probably reward our rebukes with replying, that he intended no evil, or that he injured none but himself. All this insult must be expected ; all this, out of compassion to precious, perishing souls, ought patiently to be endured. Although the drowning man does not immediately seize the rope thrown out for his relief ; yet a concern for his preservation would oblige to continue the offer. Although the man conflicting with some malignant disease, through ignorance, may reject the medicine when administered ; yet a regard for his recovery will constrain to repeat the application. Rather, infinitely rather, should we patiently persevere with sinners, when their sat-

vation or damnation for eternity are at stake. "*The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all ; apt to teach ; patient in meekness ; instructing those that oppose themselves ; if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth.*" "*Reprove, rebuke, exhort,*" is the apostolic injunction, "*with all long-suffering and doctrine.*"—Our feelings may rather be injured for a time, than their souls damned for eternity. Besides, the *conversion of sinners* so obstinate, constitutes our noblest triumphs ; it excites in the spirits of the just the loudest hallelujahs now, and will form the brightest jewels in our crown hereafter. Noble, in this respect, worthy our imitation, was the conduct of the apostles of the Lamb—" *Being reviled, we bless ; being persecuted, we suffer it ; being defamed, we intreat ; lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.*"

But this forbearance is not necessary barely towards the unprincipled and profligate ; there is equal necessity of exercising it towards the living members of the body of Christ. As in the family of nature, so in the family of grace, there is an almost infinite variety of disposition. Much imperfection adheres to the best, arising partly from ignorance, partly from prejudices of education, and custom ; partly from the remains of a legal spirit, and various other causes ; and a concern for their edification calls loudly for the exercise of prudence

and patience. It is probably to this yielding, accommodating disposition, the apostle alludes in the following passage:—“*Unto the Jew, I became as a Jew; that I might gain the Jew. To the weak, I became as weak; that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men; that I might by all means save some.*”

4. The steward is in all respects responsible to him by whom he was called to the office. He is answerable for every part of his conduct; not only for the disposition of his master's goods, but also for his behaviour towards the members of the house. An impression of our responsibility as officers in the family of Jesus, ought to reign supreme in our hearts, and rouse to the most diligent discharge of every duty. It is the polar star, to which every administration, both public and private, ought unvaryingly to centre. The great ruler of the house, in committing the treasure to his different stewards, positively commands, “*Occupy until I come;*” when the reckoning will be required. While this consideration calls to unwearied diligence in discharging the duties of our high vocation, it also requires the most rigid impartiality in dispensing the mysteries of the kingdom. Solemn, awful consideration! For each distribution of this sacred provision; for every admission to, or exclu-

son from, the privileges of the house, we must give account to HIM, whose eyes are as a flame of fire ; who is now our omniscient witness ; who will shortly appear as our impartial Judge, and render to every man according to his work. This all-solemn reflection did the great God, our Saviour, frequently revive in the minds of his apostles ; and by it admonished them to unwearied industry and zeal in his service. “ Behold I come quickly : Hold fast that which thou hast. Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord cometh. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.” This awful reflection did the great apostle urge powerfully on Timothy, his son ; and through him on the servants of the cross, in every succeeding age : “ I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and kingdom ; preach the word ; do the work of an evangelist ; make full proof of thy ministry.”

5. The steward naturally expects a suitable reward for his services. He looks up to the proprietor of the house for an honorable compensation. In this respect, our divinely gracious master has given the stewards in his family the most abundant

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foul-supporting encouragement. While he forewarned us, without reserve, of all the pain, the poverty, the reproach, the persecution, which might be expected; that we should be *hated of all men for his name's sake*; despised by the gay, as gloomy and melancholy; ridiculed by the worldly wise, as ignorant and enthusiastic; reproached by the great, as mean and contemptible; disdained by the carnally secure, as disturbing the peace of society, as *turning the world upside down*; he encourages, amidst all this contempt, with the prospect of an *exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. “*There is no man, that hath forsaken,*” is his own declaration; a declaration, full of condescension on his part—full of consolation on ours: “*There is no man, that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or lands, for my sake and the gospel, but he shall receive an hundred fold; now, in the present time, with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life.*” Does our profession expose to outward poverty? He promises in reversion his own *unsearchable riches*. Are we called to take up our cross? This will shortly be succeeded by a crown incorruptible. Does our master call to unwearied diligence, to be *instant in season and out of season*? This shall be rewarded by an eternity of ease and enjoyment. “*They shall rest from their labors. To him that overcometh, I will give to sit down with me on my throne.*” How did the soul

of the great apostle swell beyond the chains of persecution, and rise superior to all opposition, while he contemplated that glory which was afterwards to be revealed. This prospect seemingly softened the rigors of fatigue, gilded the gloom of the dungeon, blunted the edge of the sword, quenched the violence of flames, and brightened with the light of heaven the dark vale and shadow of death. *“None of these things trouble me;”* not all that their ingenuity can devise, or their power perpetrate: *“Neither hold I my life dear; that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to declare the grace of God. If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.”* Equal to the bold, dignified challenges of his life, were the triumphs of his dying hour. *“I am now ready to be offered; and the time of my departure is at hand.”*

Compared with these, how base, how contemptible, have been the last expressions of those admired as heroes, as poets, as philosophers; of those who by their valour have risen to empire, or by the efforts of genius have borne away the palm of literary fame. *“I have fought a good fight: I have finished my course: I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of right-*

edusness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearing."

The application suggested by this doctrine, is equally obvious and interesting.

1. Since the gospel of Jehovah is a mystery, its neglect or opposition, by an ungodly age, and even by the worldly wise* of that age, is cause, neither of surprise, nor discouragement. "The preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness." "Christ crucified," in every period of the world, has been to many, "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; the favour of death unto death." The reason is obvious. The human un-

* The author, by no means, acknowledges, that the preponderancy of natural talents, or acquired learning, is, or has been, on the side of infidelity; because the contrary is fact. The living God, in righteous sovereignty, may suffer many, who are carnally wise, to become scriptural fools; yet in different ages, I may add, in every age, some who have ascended the very summit of literary eminence, have believed, and advocated our holy religion. Christianity can number among her sons, a Grotius, a Newton, a Boyle, a Bacon, a Locke, a Milton, an Addison; who, for every accomplishment, both natural and acquired, may be pronounced the brightest ornaments of human nature. These illustrious men, although they entertained different sentiments respecting particular doctrines of scripture, yet cordially concurred in receiving it as a revelation from heaven, and in recommending it as worthy of all acceptance. Even in our

derstanding is naturally blind, and cannot, of itself, discover his excellence or glory. The man without eyes, cannot discern the light of the sun, or admire the beauty of colours: He who is destitute of hearing, cannot be charmed with the melodies of music: Having lost the sense of smelling, he is incapable of relishing the fragrance of the rose. As in natural, in spiritual things also, senses must be possessed, suitable to the objects to be discerned. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: They are foolishness unto him: Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Whatever diversity may appear

own age, which a noted blasphemer† of the Saviour's cross has complimented as the *age of reason*, hundreds can be found, naturally as rational as himself, and whose reason has not been prostituted by soul intoxication, who believe that all scripture is given by inspiration of God; who have meekness and modesty enough to sit at the feet of Jesus, and adore those mysteries of his gospel, which they are unable fully to comprehend.

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† The allusion to Thomas Paine, the author of the "Age of Reason," is too obvious to require explanation. I shall, therefore, transcribe the very words of a masterly defender of the Christian faith, respecting that retailer of infidelity. "As to Paine, he is well known to have been a profane swearer and drunkard. We have evidence upon oath, that religion was his favorite topic when intoxicated."

Fuller's Gospel its own Witness.—Conduct of believers and unbelievers.—Page 98.

among men naturally, some possessing lesser, others larger capacities ; whatever difference may arise from the advantages of education ; in spiritual things all are equally blind, until enlightened by Jehovah the Spirit. "For it is written—"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." "Where is the wise man ? Where is the scribe ? Where is the disputer of this world ? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world ?" True it is, eminence of natural genius, improved by liberal learning, and sanctified by the spirit of wisdom, give an immense superiority. Possessed of such qualifications, the man is capable of searching more thoroughly the mysteries of redemption ; of pointing out their consistence with the divine character and government ; of arranging their doctrines, and silencing the cavils of unbelievers. But first he must *learn of the Father* : Like a star of larger size, he may shine with superior lustre ; but he himself must first be enlightened by *the Sun of Righteousness*.

2. We learn from this passage, what are those truths which ought principally to occupy our attention ; which should constitute the great theme of our private studies, and public administration ; the plain, peculiar doctrines of the cross ; the simple

truths of revelation ; neither recommended by human wisdom, nor accommodated to human prejudice or corruption. We are appointed stewards, not of the learning of the schools ; not of the discoveries of philosophy ; not of the charms of moral speculation ; but *of the mysteries of God.* These it becomes us humbly to improve, as sinners, that require a free salvation. These it becomes us to dispense, with all simplicity, to that household over which “ the Holy-Ghost hath made us overseers.” This is the provision, which the glorious proprietor hath committed to our trust : And to be addressing our hearers with harangues merely moral, with refined sentiments, or learned speculations, would be to offer *husks, or stubble, or straw,* while in our *Father’s house* is bread immortal and divine. These observations, however familiar, cannot be too frequently realised : They were, perhaps, never more important, nor more seasonable, than in the age in which we live. There is an uncommon affectation, at present, to fashion the gospel of Jesus after the wisdom of the world. Is not natural religion frequently recommended, to the degradation of revealed ? Are not virtue, morality, good-will to all, lavishly extolled ; while the cardinal doctrines, of peace with God, through the cross of Immanuel ; justification, through his eternal righteousness ; regeneration and sanctification, by the efficacy of his

grace, are overlooked, if not rejected? A late writer, with more hardihood than usual, has ascribed the alarming progress of infidelity to the preaching of the peculiar doctrines of christianity. On this assertion, suffice it to remark, that the discovery has been made since the age of the apostles, and is taught by another inspiration than the Holy-Ghost. They spake "the wisdom of God in a mystery:" They "determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified:" They preached not in "the enticing words of man's wisdom; lest the cross of Christ should become of none effect;" but in the "words which the Holy-Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." And the fact is too notorious to be denied, that when their successors endeavored to recommend themselves, by blending philosophy with divinity; the gospel of Jesus with the learning of the schools; purity of doctrine degenerated in the church,* and living godliness languished in the heart. The experiment is equally

* The author takes the liberty of inserting the following remark, of the very learned and judicious Dr. Owen; and the remark is the more entitled to our attention, as it is founded upon undeniable fact. In his history of the heresies which early reproached the church, and the causes which produced them, he adds—"The pretended defence of truth, with arts and arms of another kind than the simple application of scripture, has been the bane of religion, and lost the peace of christians beyond re-

blasphemous and vain, to attempt amending the wisdom of Jehovah by the wisdom of mortals. Emboldened, therefore, by apostolic example, and encouraged by apostolic success, let us determine to rejoice in nothing as men, to proclaim nothing as ministers, but *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*; to

covery; and it may be observed, that whilst this way alone, the use of scripture for the preservation of truth, was insisted on, that although innumerable heresies arose one after another, they never made any great progress, nor attained unto any such consistency as to make a stated opposition to the truth; but the errors themselves, and their authors, were as *vagrant meteors*, which appeared a little and vanished away. Afterwards it was not so, when other ways and means, for the suppression of heresies, were judged convenient and needful. The Lord Christ," adds this illustrious champion, in language full of consolation and triumph, "The Lord Christ, continueth his word, with the faithful ministry, to reveal, declare and vindicate the sacred truth, for the conviction of gainsayers; and if we are not wanting to our duty, through the aids of divine grace promised us, we shall finally triumph in this cause, and transmit this truth, inviolate, to them that succeed us in the profession of it."

Owen's preface to his "Person and glory of Christ."

To this may be added, the remarks of a late, very elegant, and ingenious author. After pronouncing the peculiar doctrines of the cross to have been the great engine of reformation, he laments our present departure from these doctrines; and represents our present degeneracy of practice, as the immediate consequence of such departure. "They profess to make it their chief object to inculcate the moral and practical precepts of christianity, without sufficiently maintaining, often without justly

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wield, in our warfare, those weapons which are *not carnal*, but *spiritual*; and then we may confidently trust, that they will be *mighty through God*, for the conversion and salvation of souls.

Let none conclude from these observations, that the religion of nature is renounced, or the excellence of morality denied. Shall we be charged with despising the gentle flowings of the rivulet, merely because we express greater emotions at the more majestic movements of the ocean; or with rejecting the light of the stars, because we kindle with greater admiration at the more dazzling glories of the sun? We preach the necessity of love to God, not indeed as the foundation of our acceptance, but the effect of his love, *shining in the face of Jesus Christ*. We profess the necessity of repentance, although not the condition of our reconciliation, yet as a grace, wrought in the heart, by the Holy Ghost. We exhibit the moral law, not indeed to

laying, the grand foundation of the sinner's acceptance with God, or pointing out how the practical precepts of christianity grow out of her peculiar doctrines, and are inseparably connected with them. By this fatal error, the very genius and essential nature of christianity underwent a change. She no longer retained her peculiar character, or produced that appropriate frame of spirit, by which her followers had been characterised."

Wilbeorce's View—268, 269.

be obeyed for salvation, but as fulfilled in its precept by the *life*, as satisfied in its penalty by the *death*, of the everlasting surety, and now proposed as the rule of our obedience in his hand. We maintain the excellence of morality, of love to God, of good will to men, although not as procuring the favor of the Eternal, yet as blessed consequences of our union to the Son of God, and influences derived from him, as our ever-living HEAD. We acknowledge the charms of virtue, of patience under suffering, of forgiveness to those who injure us, of compassion towards our fellow-mortals in distress: But this virtue, this patience, this forbearance, these compassions, like so many plants of righteousness, must grow on Calvary, and be nourished with the blood of its cross. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law."

3. We learn from this doctrine, the importance of being wholly occupied in the duties of our office; of being employed, either privately exploring these mysteries of the kingdom, or publicly distributing them to the necessities of the family. It is cause of humiliation and grief, that many, who were once solemnly consecrated to the service of the gospel, afterwards relinquish, in part, their occupation: They prostitute their time and talents to

purposes widely different and inferior. One becomes embarrassed with the cares of this world; another assumes the statesman, by engaging in political discussions; another is involved in philosophical research, or in some other pursuit, foreign to his ministerial office. These exercises, as applied to the spiritual steward, may be pronounced *striving, but not lawfully*. Thus to be occupied, is indeed running a race, but wandering from the path which leads to the prize. "No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the cares of this life; that he may please him who hath called him to be a soldier." What! are not the mysteries of Jehovah incarnate, and our redemption through his blood, sufficiently ennobling to occupy our undivided attention? Here is range, ample, unbounded range, for the most speculative understanding, for the most excursive imagination. What nobler subject can occupy the research of mortals, than the mystery of a TRIUNE JEHOVAH: THREE in ONE: ONE in THREE? What more exalted theme than GOD, *manifested in the flesh*? That matchless, mysterious name, so full of grace, so full of glory, IMMANUEL; uniting in itself, the uncreated, eternal excellencies of the God; the finite, frail properties of the man? What subject more elevating in itself, more interesting to us, than the substitution of the eternal Son in our covenant room? He condemn-

ed, that we might be acquitted? He a man of sorrows, that we might partake ineffable joy? The Son degraded to the condition of a servant, that the slave might be promoted to the dignity of sons! Mysteries these, which the intellect of Gabriel, however enlarged, is too contracted to comprehend; and after the research of eternity, shall not be fully explored. How dignified in itself; how appropriate to every ambassador of Jesus, was that resolution of the apostle—"What things were gain to me;" whatever might subserve my worldly ease or interest; whatever might promote my reputation as a scholar and philosopher; "these I counted loss for Christ." We behold the illustrious champion, taking each external advantage, nobly sacrificing it on the cross of calvary, and desiring to glory in *nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified*. That same ministry, which formed the delight, the boast, of his own soul, he powerfully* pressed upon

* The obligations imposed on candidates for the ministry in the Episcopal church, so replete with sound instruction, and so pertinent to our present purpose, cannot be improperly inserted. "They are required to have always painted on their remembrance, how great a treasure was committed to their charge; and to apply themselves, wholly, to this one thing, and to draw all their cares, and studies this way, and to this end; and that by their daily reading and weighing the scriptures, they will study to wax riper and stronger in the ministry."

Buinet's Pastoral Care.—Page 89.

Timothy his son :—“ Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate on these things ; give thyself wholly to them ; that thy profiting may appear unto all.”

Permit me, reverend Fathers and Brethren, to trespass longer on your patience, by adverting to the high dignity and awful solemnity, of this stewardship, committed to our trust. How honorable the condition of being workers together with Jehovah, in that most sublime, most astonishing, of his purposes, the recovery of a perishing world ! To stand as ambassadors for the KING of Kings ; and by all the majesty of his authority, by all the endearments of his grace, entreat sinners to be reconciled, to believe, and repent, and be saved ! “ The ministry of reconciliation is given us.” In holy admiration, may not each of us exclaim—Lord, what am I, that I should be thus distinguished ; that to me the unsearchable riches should be entrusted ! In holy gratitude, may we not adore with the apostle, “ I thank Christ Jesus our Lord,” that, weak as I am, worthless as I am, “ he hath accounted me faithful ; putting me into the ministry :” He hath committed to me that treasure, by which my own

soul may be enriched, and which enriches to immortal glory, all who receive it! That Jehovah should save any of our apostate race, is a subject of wonder; but that he should choose one of this race, who is by nature equally guilty, equally polluted, equally abominable, and appoint him the instrument of salvation to others; is a wonder that surpasseth: It is a mystery of sovereignty, of grace, of condescension, which excites our gratitude now, and must fill all heaven with admiration through eternity. "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 of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen."

Again, bear with me, while we reflect on the awful solemnity of our office. To us, the souls, the precious souls of men, are now committed; and at our hands, if indolent or unfaithful, their damnation will finally be charged. Are we duly impressed with this all-solemn consideration? Do we occasionally throw our eyes over our flock, viewing each individual, each man, each woman, under our care, as a trust committed us of the living God; as a candidate for an immortal destiny, either of glory, or of wrath? Are we watching over them, "with prayers and tears, night and day, as

those who must give an account ; that we may do it with joy and not with grief." Have we been, in no instance chargeable, either through indifference or untenderness, with the complaint urged against the shepherds of Israel ? " Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe with the wool, but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened ; neither have ye healed that which was sick ; neither have ye bound up that which was broken ; neither have ye brought again that which was driven away ; neither have ye fought that which was lost." Are we careful to recommend, by every part of our deportment in private, those doctrines which we announce from the pulpit—" Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed ; but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God ; in labors, in watchings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the armour of righteousness, upon the right hand and upon the left." If any man neglect the great salvation, he shall not, he cannot escape : But the damnation of the unholy, unprofitable servant, must be dreadful beyond description. While he is doomed to endure, in his own person, that worm which never dies, and those flames which shall never be quenched ; that worm shall be envenomed, those flames infuriated, by the blasphemies of others, brought to

perdition through his inattention and sloth. They will be eternally reviling him; gnashing their teeth upon him, as chargeable with their destruction, by not forewarning them of that place of torment. "O Lord, who is sufficient for these things? O Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no flesh be justified."

Impressed with these considerations, does it not become us to awake from our sloth; to throw off every weight, whatever might embarrass us in discharging the duties of our high vocation; to keep every gift, every grace, in constant, vigorous exercise; to occupy, with unremitting diligence, each moment of our time? Accursed be that present ease, which is indulged at the peril of never-ending pain. Let that gain be rejected, as worse than loss, which is obtained at the hazard of our own damnation, or the damnation of those committed to our care.— May those moments perish from the record of our lives, which are wasted in idleness, in amusements, in worldly company, or worldly avocations; while our brethren by nature are sinking a prey to devouring flames. Let those honors wither in eternal disgrace, which are sought in pursuits foreign to our ministerial profession, while men are *perishing, for whom Christ died*; men who might have eternally adorned his mediatorial crown. By all the value

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of our own souls ; by all the value of the souls of others ; by the compassions of a bleeding Saviour ; by the solemnities of his second appearing ; by the terrors of being *cast, as unprofitable servants, into outer darknes*, while others, our inferiors, it may be, in age, and opportunity, and office, are welcomed to the joys of their Lord ; let us be roused to *preach the word ; to remain instant, in season, and out of season ; to make full proof of our ministry*. The Lord enable us all so to run, that we may obtain the prize. May he render us instrumental in turning *many to righteousness* ; that through the riches of his grace, we may *shine as stars, and suns, in his everlasting kingdom*.

Called to be a steward of the mysteries of God, I conclude, offering them to the reception of the family present. By the authority of the great Lord of the house, I this moment unlock these treasures, these inexhaustible treasures, and tender them for the use, the enjoyment, of every man, of every woman, in this assembly. Art thou in poverty ? I present thee unsearchable riches. Art thou naked ? I offer thee incorruptible clothing ; robes of everlasting righteousness. Art thou in want ? I tender thee immortal bread ; that bread, of which he who partakes shall hunger no more. Art thou in debt, bound over to the curse of a broken covenant ? I announce the jubilee of release :

I offer thee a pardon, written in the blood of God, and sealed by a triune Jehovah. Art thou unworthy? I am warranted to tender all, of grace, free grace, absolute grace, unconditional, unmerited grace. All these treasures of the kingdom, precious as they are, costly as they were to the eternal surety; all these treasures are as free to thee, as the grace of Jehovah can render them, or the lips of Jehovah can pronounce them. Would to God, I could prevail with you to receive them! Would to God, I could persuade every male, and every female; the bond and the free; the black and the white; the more pure and the more profligate; to draw near, and accept this great salvation. *“The Spirit and the Bride say, come: Let him that heareth say, come: Let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life, freely.”* *“We are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead; be ye reconciled to God.”*

Now to Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask or think; to this Lord Jesus, who purchased, with the eternal Father, who elected, and the ever-blessed Spirit, who applies; the Author of all grace in time, and of all glory through eternity; be ascribed worship and adoration, now and everlastingly. AMEN.