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IMPRIMATUR,

May, 30.
1673.

Sam. Parker.

Eliza A Pope - Mother of *Stee*
Julia

DISCOURSE

Concerning the

KNOWLEDGE

OF

JESUS CHRIST,

AND

Our Union and Commu-
nion with him, &c.

By *William Sherlock*, Rector of *St George*
Buttolph lane, London.

L O N D O N,

Printed by *J. M.* for *Walter Kettilby*, at the
Bishops-Head in *St Paul's Church-Yard.*

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THE P R E F A C E.

Christian Reader,

I Am conscious to my self of so honest a design in writing this Discourse, that I am very very well armed against those various censures, which are the usual reward of such Attempts; for there is no such Sanctuary against the rudest clamours, and the most unjust reproaches, as a good Conscience. I was heartily grieved to see so many well-disposed Persons abused with words and phrases, which either signifie nothing, or have a very ambiguous and doubtful, or a very bad sense; when I have observed that great zeal, which some men have for the Worship of God, I have often thought, what great

The Preface.

Instruments they might be of Gods glory, were their zeal directed and governed with Knowledge and Judgment; and when I have observed, how innocently and vertuously some of those men live, who have espoused such Principles, as naturally tend to make them bad, I have thought, what excellent Persons they might prove; did they rightly understand so excellent a Religion, as is published to the World in the Gospel of Christ; such thoughts as these at first engaged me in this Work, to rectifie those mistakes, which will either make men bad, or hinder and retard their progress in true goodness, which is so pious and charitable a design, as may at least plead my excuse, though it should appear to be a mistaken zeal.

In the management of this Discourse I have carefully avoided all personal reflexions, have not med-
led

The Preface.

led with the lives and actions of men, which I am so charitable as to hope, may be more orthodox than their judgments : I have represented their opinions in their own words, and am not conscious to my self, that I have put any other sense upon their words, than they intended, and I cannot see, what reason any man hath to take it ill ; that I repeat that, which he himself thought fit to publish : where they pretend to argue gravely, I have examined their Arguments with all possible gravity and solemnity ; where they plainly toy and trifle, I have so far complied with their humour, as to smile sometimes, though as modestly as any man can desire : I have taken care, not only to unteach men, what was amiss, but to explain and confirm the true notions of Religion, lest any man should suspect, that under a pretence of rectifying mi-

The Preface.

stakes I designed to expose all Religion: what men will account severe, I cannot tell, because the gentlest Arguments will appear severe to any man, who is pinch't by them; but I have given no hard words, and have sometimes called things by softer names, than they deserve, on purpose to avoid the imputation of severity, which is now the common artifice to teach men to despise and reproach, what they cannot answer: and if after all this I cannot escape without some hard names and hard censures, I must be contented with my portion; and indeed no man ought to expect better usage, who considers, that Mr. Baxter himself, who hath deserved so well for his pious labours, could not escape, when he touch't upon their Darling Notions.

And now, Christian Reader, I shall beg no more of thee, than to
read

The Preface.

read this Discourse with an honest and unprejudiced mind, and as I did not compose it without imploring the guidance and direction of God, so I recommend it to thee with my hearty prayers, that it may prove as useful, as my intentions were honest and charitable.

Farewel.

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James E

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THE
INTRODUCTION.

CHAP. I.

ALL error hath some appearance of truth ; it being impossible to believe a plain and undisguised falshood: but yet most men are so easie and credulous, so impatient of severe inquiries, or byassed by so many corrupt passions and interests, that they are too often imposed on by very slight appearances: And commonly the first and fundamental mistake is in a confusion of names, in a doubtful and ambiguous use of words, especially in matters of Religion, which depend upon Revelation, and must be judged by the publick and authentick Records of inspired men: for

B it

it happens too often in this Case, that men consider nothing but the sound of words, and from thence form such uncouth *Ideas* of Religion, as are fitted to the meanness of their understandings, or gratifie their natural Genius and disposition, or are calculated to serve an interest: And thus the Gospel of our Saviour is defaced and obscured by affected Mysteries, and Paradoxes, and senseless propositions; and Christ himself, who was the brightness of his Fathers glory, and the express image of his Person, who in the most plain and perspicuous manner declared the will of God to us, is represented with a thicker Vail upon his Face than *Moses*, and the glory of the second Covenant is much more obscured with a mist of words, than the first was with Types and Figures.

This will appear to any man, who shall observe, what strange interpretations are commonly made of those Texts of Scripture, especially in *St. Pauls* Epistles, wherein Christ is mentioned, what absurd propositions are built on them, what pernicious consequences drawn from them, to defeat the great ends of Christs appearing in the flesh. I

I always took it for granted, that Christ and his Religion were very well agreed, but, if we believe some men, there is as irreconcilable a difference between the Religion of *Christs Person*, and of his *Gospel*, as between the *Law* and *Grace*: For the *Gospel* of Christ is as severe a dispensation as the *Law*, which dooms all men to Eternal misery, who live not very innocent and virtuous Lives; but the Person of Christ is all Grace, a meer refuge and Sanctuary for the wicked and ungodly.

Surely here must be a mistake somewhere; for I am still of the mind, that the Person of Christ is not at odds with his *Gospel*; and that the Person of Christ will save none whom his *Gospel* condemns; or if Christ would save those, whom his *Gospel* condemns, *viz.* impenitent and incorrigible Sinners, I cannot imagine how men should know this without a particular Revelation, and I hope, they do not mean this by the private testimony of the Spirit to work assurance in them; And yet we can think of no other way, since the *Gospel* is so silent in this matter: But it is easie to observe, where

The various significations

the mistake lies: for some men, where-
 ever they meet with the word *Christ*
 in Scripture, always understand by it
 the Person of Christ, and thus Faith in
 Christ, and hope in Christ, and the
 like Phrases, are expounded of a fidu-
 cial relyance and recumbency on the
 Person of Christ for Salvation in con-
 tra-distinction to obedience to his
 Laws, which sets up a *Religion of the
 Person of Christ* in opposition to the
Religion of his Gospel. And therefore
 the best way of rectifying this mi-
 stake, which sets the Person and the
 Gospel of Christ at such odds, is to ex-
 amine the various significations of this
 name Christ in Scripture, which shall
 serve as an Introduction to what fol-
 lows.

And first *Christ* is originally the
 name of an Office, which the Jews
 call the Messias or one anointed by
 God: for under the Law, their Pro-
 phets, Priests, and Kings, were invested
 in their several Offices by the Cere-
 mony of anointing them with Oyl,
 which was typical of that divine Un-
 ction the Holy Jesus received at his
 Baptism, when the Spirit of God de-
 scended on him like a Dove. All those
 legal

legal Unctions were accomplisht in *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, whom God anointed with the Holy Ghost, and with power, *Acts* 10. *Verse*, 38. which was his Consecration to the Mediatory Function, and virtually contained all those Offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, which are not properly distinct Offices in Christ, but the several parts, and different administrations of his Mediatory Kingdom.

His Preaching the Gospel (which we commonly call his Prophetical Office) was the exercise of his Regal Power and Authority, in publishing his Laws, and the conditions of Eternal Life. Hence the Gospel is so often called the Kingdom of Heaven, and our Saviour tells *Pilate*, that he was born to be a King, and the principal exercise of his Kingly Power in this World consists in bearing witness to the truth, *John* 18. 37. that is, it was an Act of his Regal Power to Conquer error and ignorance, to destroy the Kingdom of darkness by the brightness of his appearing, and to erect his Throne in the hearts and Consciences of men, by the power and evidence of truth; which is a true spiritual Kingdom.

And he was a Kingly Priest, a Priest after the order of *Melchizedec*, who was King of *Salem*, (the new *Jerusalem* which comes down from Heaven) and Priest of the most high God. *Hebr. 7. Verse 1.* when he offered himself a Sacrifice for sin, he acted like a King. No man took his life from him, but he had power to lay it down, and he had power to take it again, in the *10th Chapter of St. John's Gospel*, and *18. Verse.* Herein he differ'd from other Kings, that he laid the Foundation of his Kingdom in his own blood, purchas'd and redeem'd his Subjects by the Sacrifice of himself.

And that, to which we commonly appropriate the name of Regal Power, that authority he is invested with, to Govern his Church, to send his Spirit, to forgive sins, to dispense his Grace, and supernatural assistances, to answer Prayers, to raise the dead, and judge the World, and bestow immortal life on all his sincere Disciples, all this is the reward of his death and sufferings, and is therefore called his intercession, because like the intercession of the high Priest under the Law, it is founded on his expiation and Sacrifice.

face. *With his own blood he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Hebrews 9. Verse 12.* so that *intercession* signifies the Administration of his Mediatorial Kingdom: the Power of a Regal Priest to expiate and forgive sins.

This is a true account of the nature of *Christ's* Kingdom, and the method whereby it is erected. He first conquers the minds of men by the power of his Word and Spirit; and reduces them into subjection to God; and then he pardons their sins, and raiseth them into an immortal life by the expiation of his Sacrifice, and that Power and Authority, which is founded on it.

And this is the interpretation of the name *Christ*, which signifies a Mediatorial King, immediately appointed by God to that Office, and consecrated to it by a Divine and Supernatural Unction. And thus the name *Christ* signifies in those places of Scripture, where *Jesus* is said to be the *Christ*, *i. e.* that *Messias*, whom God promised to send; Which are so many and so obvious, that I need not name them.

Secondly, Though *Christ* is origi-

nally the name of an Office, yet it is used in Scripture to signifie the Person, who is invested with this Office : for the use of names being for distinction, and the Office of a Mediator, which is the first signification of the name Christ, being appropriate to Him, it might well serve for a proper name, when once it was known, who was *the Christ*. And therefore though before his designation to this Office was publickly owned, he was only called *Jesus*, the name given him by the Angel, before he was born; yet, when by his resurrection from the dead, He was declared with power to be the Son and the *Christ* of God, *Christ* became as much his proper name, as *Jesus* was before. In the Gospels, which contain the History of his Life and Death, He is always called *Jesus*, because all this time it was disputed, whether he were the *Christ* or not; but in the Epistles, which are directed to the Christian Churches, which were founded on this Faith, that *Jesus* is the *Christ*, he is as familiarly called *Christ* as *Jesus*, and oftentimes by both, *Jesus Christ*. For there can be no mistake in the Person, by what name soever he

he be called, whether it belong to his Office, or Nature, or circumstances of his Life and Fortune, if there be but *One*, to whom that name belongs.

Thirdly, Christ signifies the Gospel, and Religion of Christ, as *Moses* signifies the Writings, and Laws of *Moses*, and the Prophets, the Writings or Sermons of the Prophets; in the 16. Ch. of *St. Lukes* Gospel, 29. Verse, *They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them*; and in the 31. Verse, *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be perswaded, though one rise from the dead.* And there is nothing more usual in common speech, than to call any Laws, or Religion, or Philosophy, by the name of the first Authors: Thus in the 6. Chapter to the *Galathians* 15. Verse. *In Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new Creature*: that is, in the Gospel, and Religion of Christ, nothing is of any value to recommend us to the favour of God, but a new Nature, a holy and vertuous life: The Law preferr'd Circumcision before Uncircumcision, but the Gospel of Christ makes no such distinction; but instead of those external signs requires

quires the inward purity of heart. Thus in the second Chapter of the *Ep. to Coll.* 8. Verse; *Beware lest men spoil you through Philosophy, and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the Rudiments of the World, and not after Christ.* Where *after Christ* is opposed to the *traditions of men*, and the *Rudiments of the World*, and therefore must signifie not the *Person*, but the *Religion or Gospel of Christ*, *i. e.* have a care, lest you be corrupted with the foolish opinions and superstitions of men, which are inconsistent with the Christian Philosophy, a plain contradiction to the Doctrine and Religion of Christ. And in the 6. Verse, *As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him. i. e.* obey the Doctrine of Christ, as you have been taught it by us, for so in the next Verse he calls it, *Being established in the Faith, as you have been taught.* The like we may see in the 4. Chapter of the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, 20, 21. Verses, *But you have not so learned Christ, if so be, you have heard him, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.* Now what can *learning Christ* signifie? but learning the Gospel of Christ. And how could the

the

the *Ephesians*, who never saw Christ in the flesh, be said to *hear him*, in any other sense, than as they heard his Gospel preach't to them, *ver. 8.* and to be *instructed in him*, as the truth is in Jesus (for so *ἐν αὐτῷ ἐδιδάχθητε* signifies, not, as our Translators render it, being taught by him, but instructed in him) must be expounded of his Religion, in its genuine and primitive simplicity, so as Christ taught it his Disciples, without the mixture of such corrupt and impure Doctrines, as the Gnostick Hereticks had taught under the name of Christianity. These I take to be very convincing allegations of the use of the name Christ, for his Doctrine and Religion.

Fourthly, It is acknowledg'd by all, that *Christ* sometimes signifies the Church of Christ, *which is his body, the fullness of him, that filleth all in all:* And thus we must understand those Phrases of being *in Christ*, *engrafted into Christ*, and *united to Christ*, which signifie no more than to be a Christian, One, who belongs to that Society, whereof Christ is the Head and Governour: thus it is used in the 12. Chapter of the *Ep. to the Romans*, 5.
Verse.

Verse. We being many are One Body in Christ, i. e. we are all but one Christian Society, which is the One Body of Christ. Thus Brethren in Christ, i. e. Christian Brethren, 1 Colossians. 2. Verse. And, if any man be in Christ, he is a new Creature: 2. Ep. to the Corinthians 5. Chapter 17. v. i. e. every sincere Christian is a new Creature, or, whoever professeth the Faith of Christ, and lives in Society with the Christian Church, hath obliged himself to live a new life: but of this more in its proper place.

Thus variously is the name *Christ* used in the Writings of the Apostles, which hath occasioned very great mistakes in some mens Divinity, who are very zealous to advance Christs *Person* to the prejudice and reproach of his *Religion*. Who, instead of those substantial duties of the love of God, and men, and an universal holiness of life, have introduced a fanciful *application* of Christ to our selves, and *Union* to him, set off with all those choice Phrases of *closing with Christ, and embracing Christ, and getting into Christ, and getting an interest in Christ, and trusting, and relying, and rowling*

our

our souls on Christ: And instead of obedience to the Gospel, and the Laws of Christ, have advanced a kind of Amorous and Enthusiastick devotion, which consists in a passionate love to the Person of Christ, in admiring his *Personal excellencies, and perfections, fulness, beauty, loveliness, riches, &c.* The Foundation of all which Riddles, and Mysteries, is, that these men make the Person of Christ almost the sole object of the Christian Religion, and whatever is spoken of Christ with respect to his Offices, his Laws, and his Religion, they understand of his Person, and personal excellencies. And therefore the design of this discourse is to reconcile the Person of Christ with his Religion, that men may not abuse themselves with a pretended devotion to our Saviour, while they condemn his Laws, and purposely defeat the great end of his coming into the World. And to that end I shall discourse on these following Arguments.

First, Of what use the consideration of Christs person is in the Christian Religion; Secondly, What the Knowledge of Christ is; Thirdly, Wherein our Union to Christ, and
Communion

14 *Of what use the consideration of Christs*
Communion with him consists; Fourthly, Christs love to us, and our love to Christ.

CHAP. II.

Of what use the consideration of Christs Person is in the Christian Religion.

THE first thing to be stated is, of what use the consideration of Christs *Person* is in the Christian Religion : For those men, who talk so much of the *Person*, and *Personal excellencies* of Christ frequently without any sense, and generally without any just ground from Reason or Scripture, are very clamorous, and alarm the World with strange jealousies and fears; as if there were a party of men started up, who design to make *Christ useless*, and to reduce Religion to its first Natural State, which knew no Priest, nor Sacrifice, nor Mediator. A design, which, I profess, I am wholly a stranger to, as I believe all those are, who are so much charged with
with

with it ; The Foundation of *my* hope is that, which is the Foundation of the *Christian Religion*, *the Sacrifice and Intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ*. But I doubt not, it will appear in the Sequel, what the ground of these calumnies are, *viz.* that *we are charged with making Christ useless*, only because *we dare not make his Laws and Religion so*: And to prevent such scandals for the future, I shall lay the Foundation of all in this inquiry; of what use the consideration of Christs Person is in the Christian Religion.

By the Person of Christ I mean, what all men ought to mean, who talk of Christs Person, *viz.* *Christ himself*, as every mans Person is himself: and the only proper consideration here is the greatness of his *Person*, who is the *θεός εν σαρκί* or *God man*, the Son of *God*, in whom his Soul was well pleased, who left the glories of an Eternal Throne to undertake the work of mans redemption; and this suggests many useful considerations, which have a great influence upon Religion.

As first, This is a plain demonstration of Gods love to Mankind, that he sent so *great* and so *dear* a Person,

16 *Of what use the consideration of Christs*
as his only begotten Son, into the
World to save Sinners. All Religion
is founded on a belief of Gods Good-
ness, *He that cometh to God must be-
lieve, that he is, and that he is a rewar-
der of them, that diligently seek him.*
Hebr. II. 6. that is, must believe his
Being and his Providence, that he
loves, and takes care of good men;
for no man will serve God, who does
not hope to be the better by it. And
therefore every Religion had its pro-
per demonstrations of Gods Goodness:
Natural Religion was founded on those
natural evidences of the Divine boun-
ty and goodness in making and go-
verning the World; the Mosaick Re-
ligion on those miraculous deliveran-
ces, God wrought for *Israel*, and that
particular providence, which watched
over them: the Christian Religion, on
the Incarnation, Death, and Resur-
rection of the Son of God; a work of
such stupendious love, that it is the
wonder of Angels, and the astonish-
ment, as well as praise of men. No man
can doubt of Gods good will to Sin-
ners, who sees the Son of God cloathed
with our flesh, and dying as a Sacri-
fice for our sins; this gives relief to
our

our guilty fears, and does encourage us to retrieve our past follies by new obedience, that we have so great an assurance of God's goodness; for he had nothing greater to bestow on us, than his Son; And *he that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* 8 Rom. 32.

Secondly, This gives great reverence and authority to the Gospel, that it was preached by so great a Person, as the Son of God. Laws always partake of the fate and condition of the Law-giver; the greater opinion we have of his Wisdom, and Reverence for his Person, the more sacred regard have we for his Laws; and therefore *Numa* pretended, that he received his Laws from the Goddess *Ageria*, to procure a greater veneration for them; which was imitated by *Lycurgus*, and other Law-givers: thus *God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past to the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed Heir of all things, by whom also he made the Worlds.* 1 Hebr. 1. 2.

And his greatness and Authority gives

Of what use the consideration of Christs an inviolable sanction and just reverence to his Laws. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip; for if the word spoken by Angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, 2. Hebr. 1. 2, 3. To the same purpose is that Parable in Luke 20. 9. &c.

Thirdly, The greatness of his Person gives great authority to his example. He came to be our Prophet and our guide, to teach us by his Precepts and his life; now we love to imitate great Persons, and none so great as he, who was the brightness of his Fathers Glory, and the express image of his Person. His example secures the honour and reputation of vertue, and gives us an evident demonstration, wherein the perfection of our nature consists; for he lived up to the perfection of humane nature, and the only way to be perfect is to live, as he lived. Nay the greatness of his Person makes all the expressions of his love and goodness

ness the more wonderful. That the Son of God should become man, that when he was rich, for our sakes he should become poor, that the great Lord of the Creation should become a Minister and Servant, that the Lord of life and glory should suffer and die: These are such expressions of love and goodness, as we can never fully imitate, because we can never be so great, as he was, but yet they powerfully convince us, how reasonable it is for us to stoop to the meanest offices of kindness, since we can never stoop so low, as the Son of God did, when he came down from Heaven, and took up his Lodging in the grave.

Fourthly, This assures us of the infinite value of his *sacrifice*, and the power of his *intercession*: He was a Priest of a higher order than that of *Aaron*, and his Sacrifice of a greater value than the blood of Bulls and Goats: God cannot but be pleased, when his own Son undertakes to be a ransom, and to make atonement for Sinners, which is so great a vindication of Gods Dominion and Sovereignty, of the authority of his Laws, and the Wisdom and Justice of his Providence,

Of what use the consideration of Christs
 dence, that he may securely pardon
 humble and penitent Sinners without
 reproaching any of his Attributes. And
 we can reasonably desire no greater
 security for the performance of this
 Gospel Covenant, than that it was
 sealed with the bloud of the Son of
 God, which is such a confirmation of
 God's Covenant and Promise, as the
 World never had before; Christ is the
 surety of a better Testament, *Hebr. 7.*
22. ἕως ἄτης, one who undertakes for the
 performance of it, and the security he
 gives us depends on the vertue of his
 Priesthood and Sacrifice, and the
 power of his Intercession; for so in
Verse 21. the Apostle tells us, that God
 had confirmed the Priesthood of Christ
 by Oath, *The Lord hath sworn and will*
not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever af-
ter the Order of Melchisedec: And
 whereas other Priests died, and left
 their Priesthood to their Successors, *He*
continueth for ever, and therefore hath
an unchangeable Priesthood, and is able
to save them to the uttermost, that come
unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth
to make intercession for them. Verse 23,
24, 25. And who can desire a more
 powerful Mediator than the Son of
 God,

God, to whom God hath given such signal demonstrations of his favour and acceptance by a voice from Heaven, and by the glory of his Miracles, and his Resurrection from the Dead?

And that the vertue of Christs Sacrifice and Intercession depends very much on the greatness of his Person is plain from the Epistle to the *Hebrews*; the design of which is to show, how much the Priesthood and Sacrifice of Christ excels that of the Law, and the Foundation of all is laid in the first Chapter, where the Apostle discourses of his greatness and excellency, that he was the brightness of his Fathers glory, and the express Image of his Person; the Heir of all things by whom he made the Worlds, exalted above all Angels, who hath an everlasting Throne and Scepter, and shall continue, when all other things moulder and vanish away.

But Fifthly, The Person of Christ is of no other consideration in the Christian Religion, than as it hath an influence upon the great ends of his undertaking, *i. e.* we must expect no more from Christ upon account of his Personal excellencies and perfections,

22 *Of what use the considerations of Christs*
than what he hath promised in his
Gospel: He hath told us there, what-
ever he intends to do for us, and hath
charged us to expect no more from
him. *Math. 7. 21. Not every one, that*
saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter
into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that
doth the will of my Father, which is in
Heaven. That is, you must not ex-
pect, that I will be better to you than
my word, and receive you into the
Kingdom of Heaven upon easier terms,
than I have promised, I shall be mo-
ved with none of your flattering
speeches, but how good and kind so-
ever you may fancy me, unless you
obey those Laws, I publish in my Fathers
name, I declare before hand, that I will
disown you, when I come to judgment.

For indeed should he absolve and
justifie those men, whom the Gospel
condemns, that is, wilful and incorri-
gible Sinners, this were to disanul
that Covenant which he had sealed
with his bloud: Christ is the object
of our Faith and Hope, only as he is
our Saviour, and he is our Saviour in
no other sense, than as he is our Me-
diator, and he mediates for us as our
Priest, that is in vertue of that Cove-
nant,

nant, which he hath sealed with his blood, and therefore we have no reason to expect any thing from the Person of Christ, which is not contained in his Covenant, much less which contradicts it, for that would be in effect *to renounce his Mediation, and to trust to the goodness of his nature* : And let any man judg, whether this be not to set up a new Religion, which hath no Covenant, and no Promise ; for whatever we can expect from Christ by vertue of a Promise, is contained in the Gospel, and if we expect any thing else from him upon his Personal account, it is without a promise : which at best reduces us to the same state, in which the World was, before God had made an exprefs revelation of his will, when all their hopes were founded on that natural perswasion they had of the divine Goodness, that Faith, which is the Foundation of *Natural Religion, that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Hebr. II. 6.* thus these men trust in the *Person* of Christ without any Promise, nay (which makes the case much worse) in contradiction to the terms of that

24. *Of what use the consideration of Christs, &c.*

Covenant, which he sealed with his blood: *they quit his Promise and his Covenant, to rely and rowl upon his Person.*

This is so very absurd at first sight, that I know no man will be so senseless, as to owne it *in so many words*, nor do I charge any man with it; but I say, this is the natural interpretation of trusting in the Person of Christ, in his blood, and merits, and satisfaction, fulness, and alsufficiency, and of relying and rowling the Soul on Christ for Salvation, and the like Phrases of a late date, in which some men place the whole mystery of the Gospel; if they understand any thing more by them, than expecting to be saved according to the terms of the Gospel Covenant, that is, by believing and obeying the Gospel of Christ; And certainly they must mean something more than this, or else they raise a great noise and clamour in the World, and confound mens minds with obscure and unscriptural phrases to no purpose: as will appear more in what follows.

C H A P.

CHAP. III.

Of the Knowledge of Christ.

SECT. I.

THE happiness of Mankind consists in the Knowledge and Love of God, who is the greatest and the best Being, and therefore our good God, who is never wanting to his own glory, and the happiness of his Creatures, hath taken care in all Ages by one means or other to make known himself and his will to the World.

In the first Creation of all things he left such visible impresses of his own Divine Wisdom and Power on the works of Nature, and planted in the mind of man such a natural knowledge of himself, that it was as easie to discover the first Author of all things, as it is now for a well disposed eye to see the Sun, when it shines; And while man preserved his innocence, God himself did not disdain to converse with him, and to give him very present and sensible demonstrations of his Power and Providence. In

In after Ages as Mankind grew more corrupt, and declined to Idolatry, God afforded good men the frequent apparitions of Angels, who were the great Ministers of his Providence; and to instruct the more degenerate part of Mankind, he raised up some great examples and Preachers of Righteousness, such as *Enoch*, and *Noah*, and *Abraham*; and gave such plain and undeniable proofs of his acceptance of these men, as might reasonably encourage others to imitate their examples. He translated *Enoch* immediately to Heaven, and preserved *Noah* and his Family in the Ark, when he destroyed the rest of the World by a deluge of Waters, which was a signal warning to that corrupt Generation, while the Ark was preparing, and a great example to Posterity; he sent *Lot* out of the ruins of *Sodom*, and made *Abraham* the Father of a great Nation, which was a convincing argument, how dear these good men were to God, and what others might expect from him, who would worship and fear him, as they did.

But when the World would not be reformed by these single Examples, God chose

chose the Posterity of *Abraham* to be a publick and constant demonstration of his Power and Providence, and care of good men. For when God chose the Posterity of *Abraham* to be his peculiar people, he did not design to exclude the rest of the World from his care and providence, and all possible means of Salvation, as the Apostle argues in *Rom. 3. 29. Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes of the Gentiles also:* which argument, if it have any force in it, must prove Gods respect to the Gentiles before the preaching of the Gospel, as well as since, because it is founded on that natural relation God owns to all Mankind, as their merciful Creator and Governour, which gives the Gentiles as well as Jews an intrest in his care and providence. This plainly evinces, that all those particular favours, which God bestowed on *Israel*, were not owing to any partial fondness and respect to that people, but the design of all was to encourage the whole World to worship the God of *Israel*, who gave so many demonstrations of his power and providence. For this reason God brought

Israel

Israel out of *Ægypt*, with great signs and wonders and a mighty hand, (when he could have done it with less noise and observation) that he might the more gloriously triumph over the numerous Gods of *Ægypt*, and all their enchantments and divinations, and that he might be honoured on *Pharoah* and all his Host. For this reason he maintained them in the Wilderness at the constant expence of miracles, fought all their Battles for them, and many times by weak and contemptible means overthrew great and puissant Armies, drove out the Inhabitants of *Canaan*, and gave them possession of that good land. I say one great and principal design of all this was to convince the World of the Majesty and Power of the God of *Israel*, that they might renounce their foolish Idolatries and Country Gods, and consent in the worship of that One God, who alone doth wondrous things; this account the Psalmist gives of it; that God wrought such visible and miraculous deliverances for *Israel*, to make his glory and his power known among the Heathen; *The Lord hath made known his salvation, his righteousness*

ousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the Heathen. Psalm 98. 2. That the Heathen might fear the name of the Lord, and all the Kings of the Earth his glory, i. e. that all Nations might worship God, and all Kings submit their Crowns and Scepters to him. Psal. 102. 15. that by this means they might be instructed in that important truth, That the Lord is great and greatly to be praised, that he is to be feared above all Gods; for all the Gods of the Nations are Idols, but he made the Heavens. Psal. 96. 4, 5.

And as God set up the people of *Israel* as a visible demonstration to all the World of his power and providence, so he committed his Laws and Oracles to them, from whence the rest of the World, when they pleased, might fetch the best rules of life, and the most certain notices of the divine will.

In such ways God instructed the World in former Ages, by the light of Nature, and the examples of good men, and the Sermons of the Prophets, and the publick example of a whole Nation, which God chose for that very purpose.

But

But when long and sad experience had proved all these ways ineffectual to reform the World, at last God sent his own Son into the World, to make a full and perfect Declaration of his will, to give the best rules of life, and to encourage our obedience by the most expresse promises of a blessed Immortality. This was one great design of Christ's appearing in the World, to reveal and declare God to us. *John 1. 18. No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him:* and in *Math. 11. 27. All things are delivered unto me of my Father, no man knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father, but the Son, and he, to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.* That is, God hath now committed unto Christ all the secret purposes of his Counsel concerning the Salvation of Mankind, which were concealed from Ages. None of the Prophets, which lived before, did so fully understand it, nor have we any other certain way of knowing this, but by the Revelation Christ hath made to us.

Thus in *John 14. 6, 7. Jesus saith unto*

unto him, *I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me; if you had known me, you should have known my Father also, and henceforth you have known him, and have seen him.* That is, I alone declare the true way to life and happiness, and no man can thoroughly understand the will of God but by learning of me, and therefore whoever knows me, *i. e.* whoever is acquainted with the Doctrine and Religion I preach, knows my Father also, that is, is thoroughly instructed in God's mind and will, as he proves in the following Verses. So that *to know God*, is to understand the will of God concerning the Salvation of Mankind, and *to know Christ*, is to understand that Declaration he hath made of Gods will to the World, *i. e.* the Gospel, which he Preached, which is therefore called, *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* 2 Cor. 4. 6. That is, that glorious manifestation God hath made of himself to the World by Christ: for the *face of Christ*, signifies all that, whereby he made himself known, as a man is known by his face, that is, his Laws, and Religion, and

Miracles,

Miracles, whereby it appeared, that he was the Son of God, the great Prophet and Saviour of the World; by all this the glory of God was manifested; in which the Apostle alludes to that shining glory, which appeared on the face of *Moses*, when he came down from the Mount; which was but typical of that bright and glorious manifestation, God would make of himself by Christ. God was seen in Christ, *he that hath seen me hath seen my Father*, that is in plain words, the will of God was fully declared to the World by Christ: upon which account too (as well as with respect to his divine Nature) he is called *the brightness of his Fathers glory, and the express image of his Person.* *Hebr. I. I.* those discoveries Christ hath made of God, being a bright and glorious reflexion of the Nature and Attributes of God, of his Eternal Wisdom, and truth, and holiness, as true a representation of the divine nature and will, as any Picture is of the person it represents. It is plain, that in this sense Christ is called the image of God. *2 Cor. 4. 4.* *Lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, which is the image of God, should shine*

unto

unto them. Where Christ's being the Image of God comes in very abruptly, unless we understand it in this sense, that he is the Image of God with respect to the glorious Revelations of the Gospel, which contain a true and faithful account of God's Nature and Will.

The result of all is this, that God is the last and highest object of Religious and saving Knowledge, *i. e.* that the only Knowledge necessary to the purposes of Religion, is such a knowledge of God's Nature and Will, as is sufficient to direct our actions, and encourage our obedience: and whereas God was formerly known by the light of nature, and the works of Creation and Providence, and those partial and occasional revelations of his will, which he made to the World; now the only true medium of knowing God is the Knowledge of Christ, who came into the World to declare God to us.

He knows God best, who is best acquainted with those Revelations Christ hath made of God's will: *i. e.* who understands the Gospel in its full extent and latitude. This is the meaning of that expression in *John 17. 3.*

This is life Eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent, i. e. the only way to Eternal Life is to know the nature and will of God, and the only certain way of attaining to the knowledg of God is by knowing Christ, whom God sent into the World to publish the Everlasting Gospel, who hath made more perfect revelations of Gods will, than ever the World had before, and who alone hath brought life and immortality to light; so that to know Christ is not meerly to know his Person, which we can have no other knowledge of, than what he hath been pleased to reveal to us, but to be acquainted with the whole Doctrine of the Gospel in its native simplicity, as he published it to the World, which I observed before. The Apostle calls this learning Christ, and being instructed in him, as the truth is in Jesus. For when we speak of the Knowledge of Christ, we must consider him as our Prophet, and so to know Christ signifies to know his Gospel; and to preach Christ is to preach his Gospel, to expound all those rules of life and Articles of Faith, which are contained in

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See Ch. I. concerning the signification of the name Christ.

it ; whether they are concerning the nature of God, or a future State, or his own Nature and Office, and Mediation. Thus *Philip* preached Christ to the *Samaritanes*, *Acts* 8. 5. which in *Verse* 12. is called *preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ.* That is the whole Doctrine of the Gospel.

This should make all considering men ashamed of those unreasonable and groundless clamours, that Christ is not preached, unless he be named in every sentence, whether the argument require it or not ; as if *preaching Christ* were to be understood in a literal sense of preaching nothing, but *the name of Christ* : those preach Christ most, who are careful to confirm men in the belief of the Gospel, and of that great promise of immortal life, who expound his Laws, and the true nature and design of his Mediation ; for every part of the Gospel is part of the Knowledge of Christ, and his Laws as principal a part as any, because the design of the whole Gospel is to make us obedient to these Eternal Rules of Righteousness, whereby we are transformed into the nature and Image of God,

and qualified for the happiness of Heaven.

There is indeed a larger notion of the Knowledge of God and Christ, which includes the vertue and efficacy of this knowledge: for the design of all Religious knowledge being the Government of our lives and actions, how true soever our speculations are, the Scripture brands all those as ignorant of God, who do not love, and reverence, and obey him: and though we be acquainted with the whole Doctrine of the Gospel, unless we heartily believe it, and obey all those Revelations Christ hath made, we know him not: *John 1. 2, 3. Hereby we know, that we know him, if we keep his Commandments. And Verse 4. He that saith, I know him and keepeth not his Commandments is a lyar, and the truth is not in him. And 1 John 3.6. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not, whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.* Not but that bad men may have as true a speculative knowledge of the nature and design of the Gospel, as good men have, but the meaning is, that this is a knowledge, which serves no end, which wants life and sense, and
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makes men no better ; than if they were perfectly ignorant ; and therefore is of no other account with God, than ignorance, unless it be to aggravate their sins , and their condemnation.

SECT. II.

Of acquaintance with the Person of Christ.

After this plain account wherein the Knowledge of Christ consists, the sum of which is, that to know Christ is to understand his Gospel, which contains all those revelations he made of God's will, it will be necessary to examine another notion of the Knowledge of Christ very distinct from this, which contains a greater secret, than at first one would imagine, and that is an *acquaintance with the Person of Christ* , which if we will believe some men, is the only fountain of saving knowledge.

I shall not envy the Author the

38 *Of acquaintance with the Person of Christ.*
glory of this discovery, and therefore shall honestly confess, where I had it, viz. in a Book Entitled, *Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost each Person distinctly.* Written by *John Owen, D. D.* And that I may not do this Author wrong, I must tell you, what he means by *acquaintance with Christ's Person*, an account of which we have in *digression 2. pag. 87. of the excellency of Christ Jesus.* Where he tells us, that *Christ is not only the Wisdom of God, but made wisdom to us, not only by teaching us wisdom* (that is by the Doctrines he preached, and those revelations he hath made of God's will) *as he is the great Prophet of the Church, but also because by the knowing of him, we become acquainted with the wisdom of God, which is our wisdom.* To which purpose he applies that Text, which speaks of the Doctrines and Revelations of Christ, to his Person. *Coll. 2. 3. For in him dwell all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.* So that our acquaintance with Christ's Person, in this man's Divinity, signifies such a knowledge of what Christ is, hath done, and suffered for us, from whence we may learn those
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those greater, deeper, and more saving Mysteries of the Gospel, which Christ hath not expressly revealed to us: for so he adds soon after, *that these properties of God* (his pardoning mercy, &c.) *Christ hath revealed in his Doctrine, in that revelation he hath made of God and his will, but the life of this knowledge lies in an acquaintance with his Person, wherein the express image and beams of this glory of his Father doth shine forth: that is, that these things are clearly, eminently, and savingly, only to be discovered in Jesus Christ; as he explains himself. So that it seems, the Gospel of Christ makes a very imperfect and obscure discovery of the nature, and Attributes, and will of God, and the methods of our recovery; we may thoroughly understand whatever is revealed in the Gospel, and yet not have a clear and saving knowledge of these things, unless we gain a more intimate acquaintance with the Person of Christ. This indeed advances the Person of Christ very much, but is no great commendation of his Gospel, and prophetick office: It sets up a new rule of Faith*

Of acquaintance with the Person of Christ.
 above the Gospel, viz. an acquaintance with Christ's Person, in whom dwell all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

But that you may better understand the whole mystery of this *Acquaintance with the Person of Christ*: I shall first show you what additions these men make to the Gospel of Christ from an acquaintance with his Person; and secondly, show you what an unsafe way of arguing this is, and how prejudicial to the Christian Religion. First, to show you what additions these men make to the Gospel of Christ from an acquaintance with his Person. And I confess, I am very much beholden to this Author for acknowledging whence they fetch all their *Orthodoxy*, and *Gospel Mysteries*; for I had almost pored my eyes out, with seeking for them in the Gospel, and could never find them; but I learn now, that indeed they are not to be found there, unless we be first acquainted with the *Person of Christ*. This is an argument well worth considering, and if this discourse should prove long (as I fear it will) I doubt not, but the usefulness
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of it will be a sufficient reward both to the Writer and Reader. And since I owe this discovery to Dr. *John Owen*, I shall confine my self to his method, who in the place above-mentioned tells us, that *the sum of all true wisdom and knowledge may be reduced to these three heads.*

Digr. 2.
Of the Ex-
cellency of
Christ Je-
sus. p.89.

First, The knowledge of God, his nature and properties.

Secondly, The knowledge of our selves with reference to the will of God concerning us.

Thirdly, Skill to walk in Communion with God. In these three is summed up all true wisdom and knowledge, and not any of them is to any purpose to be obtained, or is manifested; but only in and by the Lord Christ.

Where *By* is fallaciouſly added to include the Revelations Christ hath made, whereas his first undertaking was to show how impossible it is to understand these things *savingly* and *clearly*, notwithstanding all those Revelations God hath made of himself and his will by *Moses*, and the Prophets, and by Christ himself, without an acquaintance with his Person.

But to let that pass, I shall begin with
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the knowledge of God, his nature and properties; and I shall not particularly examine every thing, he says, but principally take notice of those peculiar discoveries of the nature of God, which the World was ignorant of before, and of which Revelation is wholly silent, but are now *clearly and savingly* learnt from an *Acquaintance with Christ's Person.*

The light of nature and the works of Creation and Providence, and those manifold Revelations God hath made of himself to the World, especially that last and most perfect Revelation by *Jesus Christ our Lord*; assure us, that God is infinite in all perfections; that he is so powerful, that he can do whatever he pleases; so wise, that he knows how to order every thing for the best; so good, that he desires and designs the happiness of all his Creatures according to the capacity of their natures; so holy, that he hath a natural love for all good men, and will not fail to reward them; but hates all sin and wickedness, and will as certainly punish all obstinate and incorrigible Sinners; but yet that he is very patient and long-suffering towards the worst
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of men, and uses various methods of kindness and severity to reclaim them, and is as ready to pardon them, when they return to their duty, as a kind Father is to receive an humble and penitent Prodigal: These properties of God are plainly revealed in the Scripture without any further acquaintance with the Person of Christ; And had Christ never appeared in the World, yet we had reason to believe, that God is thus wise, and good, and holy, and merciful, because not only the works of Nature and Providence, but the word of God, assure us, that he is so: the Appearance of Christ did not first discover the nature of God to us, but only gave us a greater expression of God's goodness, than ever we had before: confirms us in the belief of what we had learnt before from nature, and Revelation, just as his Resurrection, which is an ocular demonstration of another life, confirms us in the belief of that blessed Immortality, he had promised; and yet we could not have learnt this neither from the Person of Christ, had he not told us, for what ends he came into the World, as will appear more anon.

And

Digr. 2.
p. 90.

And is not this a confident man to tell us, that the *love of God to Sinners, and his pardoning mercy could never have entred into the heart of man but by Christ*; when the experience of the whole World confutes him; for whatever becomes of his new Theories, both Jews and Heathens (who understood nothing at all of what Christ was to do in order to our recovery) did believe God to be gracious and merciful to Sinners, and had reason to do so, because God himself had assured the Jews, *that he was a gracious and merciful God, pardoning iniquity, transgressions and sins.* And those natural notions the Heathens had of God, and all those discoveries God had made of himself in the works of Creation and Providence, did assure them, that God is very good; and it is not possible to understand what goodness is without pardoning Grace.

But yet the truth is, considering what these men mean by the love and pardoning Grace, and Justice, and Patience, and Long-suffering of God, I must acknowledge; that these properties could never have been discovered but by a too familiar acquaintance with

with Christ's Person; for Nature and Revelation say nothing of them;

As for Instance, he tells us, that in Christ (that is in his death and sufferings for our sins) *God hath manifested* ^{Digr. 2.} *the naturalness of this Righteousness* ^{p. 93.} (i. e. vindictive justice in punishing sin) *unto him, in that it was impossible, that it should be diverted from sinners without the interposing of a propitiation.* That is, that God is so just and righteous, that he cannot pardon sin without satisfaction to his justice: now this indeed is such a notion of justice, as is perfectly new, which neither Scripture nor nature acquaints us with: for all mankind have accounted it an Act of goodness (without the least suspicion of injustice in it) to remit injuries and offences, without exacting any punishment: And that *he* is so far from being just, that he is cruel and savage, who will remit no offence, till he hath satisfied his revenge. That part of justice, which consists in punishing offenders, was always lookt on as an Instrument of Government, and therefore the exacting or remitting punishment was referred to the wisdom of Governours, who might spare, or punish,

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nith, as they saw reason for it, without being unjust in either, and therefore, had not one who pretends to so great and personal an Acquaintance with Christ said so, I should rather have thought, that God's requiring such a Sacrifice, as the death of Christ, for the expiation of our sins was not, because he could not do otherwise, but because his Infinite Wisdom judged this the best and most effectual way of dispensing his Grace :

Ibid. p.
95.

But though this be a very terrible discovery of the naturalness of Gods righteousness or vindictive justice, yet he makes some amends for it in that comfortable discovery of his patience and long-suffering towards Sinners ; for now in Christ *the very nature of God is discovered to be love and kindness* : a happy change this from all justice to all love ! but how comes this to pass ? why the account of that is very plain : because the justice of God hath glutted its self with revenge on sin in the death of Christ, and so hence forward we may be sure he will be very kind, as a revengful man is when his passion is over ; for so he speaks very honourably of God, *whatever discoveries were made*

made of the Patience and lenity of God unto us, yet if it were not withal revealed, that the other properties of God, as his Justice and Revenge for sin, had their actings also assigned them to the full, there could be little consolation gathered from the former. That is, he would not believe God himself, though he should make never so many promises of being good and gracious to Sinners, unless he were sure, that he had first satisfied his revenge, which indeed is such a Character of the Love and Patience of God, as we could never have understood, but from an intimate acquaintance with the Person of Christ. The sum of which is, that God is all love and Patience, when he hath taken his fill of revenge, as others use to say, that the Devil is very good, when he is pleased.

But however sinners have great reason to rejoice in it, when they consider the nature and end of God's Patience and forbearance towards them, viz. That it is Gods taking a course in his infinite wisdom and goodness, that we should not be destroyed notwithstanding our sins. That as before the least sin could not escape without a just punishment,

nishment, justice being so natural to God, that he cannot forgive without punishing; so the justice of God being now satisfied by the death of Christ, the greatest sins can do us no hurt; but we shall escape with a *Notwithstanding our sins*. This it seems we learn from an acquaintance with the Person of Christ, though his Gospel instructs us otherwise, that *without holiness no man shall see God*.

As for the *Wisdom of God* (which is another property he instanceth in) no doubt, but the Gospel of Christ makes great and glorious discoveries of it, but then this is not very consistent with those other discoveries of the nature of God: for if justice be so natural to God, that nothing could satisfy him but the death of his own Son, the redemption of the World by Christ may discover his justice, or his goodness, but not his Wisdom; for Wisdom consists in the choice of the best and fittest means to attain an end, when there are more ways, than one of doing it.

But it requires no great Wisdom to chuse, when there is but one possible way: and whatever Wisdom there is
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in Gods redeeming the World by his own Son, the knowledge of it is wholly owing to the Revelations of the Gospel, not to such a fanciful acquaintance with Christ as these men talk of:

Thus you see what excellent discoveries of the Nature of God are owing to an acquaintance with the Person of Christ; And the second thing we learn from hence is the knowledge of our selves, and that in respect of Sin, and in respect of Righteousness:

As for sin, the Gospel assures us, that God is an irreconcilable Enemy to all wickedness, it being so contrary to his own most holy Nature, that if he have any love for himself, and any esteem and value for his own perfections, and works, he must hate sin, which is so unlike himself, and which destroys the beauty and perfection of his Workmanship. For this end he sent his Son into the World to destroy the works of the Devil, and to reduce Mankind to their obedience, to their great Creator, to restore them to the uprightness and integrity of their natures, and thereby to a state of friendship with God: This was the end of
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his holy Laws and precious Promises, and exemplary Life, and meritorious Death, and glorious Resurrection, and powerful Intercession for us, to deliver us from the Power and Dominion of Sin, to make us first holy, as God is, and then to receive us into that Blessed place, where God dwells.

But now acquaintance with the Person of Christ makes just such a discovery of sin, as it did of the naturalness of God's Justice to him; *i. e.* that the desert and demerit of sin is such, that it is impossible to make any atonement or satisfaction to the justice and wrath of God, but only by the Death of Christ, otherwise Christ had died in vain: that is, that God could not forgive it without full satisfaction, which nothing but the Death of Christ could make.

P. 110.

Thus we learn *our disability to answer the mind and will of God in all or any of the obedience he requireth*: that is, that it is impossible for us to do any thing that is good, but we must be acted like Machines by an external force, by the irresistible power of the Grace and Spirit of God; this I am sure is a new discovery; we learn no such

such thing from the Gospel, and I do not see, how he proves it from an acquaintance with Christ.

But still there is a more glorious discovery than this behind, and that is, *the glorious end whereunto sin is appointed and ordained* (I suppose he means by God) *is discovered in Christ, viz. for the demonstration of Gods vindictive justice in measuring out to it a meet recompence of reward, and for the praise of God's glorious grace in the pardon and forgiveness of it.* P. 112.

That is, it could not be known, how just and severe God is, but by punishing sin, nor how good and gracious God is, but by pardoning it, and therefore lest his justice and mercy should never be known to the World, he appoints and ordains sin to this end, that is Decrees, that men shall sin, that he may make some of them the Vessels of his wrath, and the examples of his fierce vengeance and displeasure, and others the Vessels of his mercy to the praise and glory of his free Grace in Christ: this indeed is such a discovery, as nature and revelation could not make. For nature would teach us, that so infinitely a glorious Being, as God is, needs

not sin and misery to recommend his glory and perfections, and that so holy a God, who so perfectly hates every thing, that is wicked; would not truckle and barter with Sin and the Devil for his glory. And that so good a God had much rather be glorious in the happiness, and perfection, and obedience of his Creatures, than in their sin and misery: and Revelation tells us the same thing, that as much as sin is for the glory of his vindictive justice, yet God takes no pleasure in punishing, delights not in the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he should return and live: that is, he had rather there were no occasion for punishing, than be made glorious by such acts of vengeance: and therefore though God be so holy as to punish incorrigible Sinners, and so merciful, as to forgive all true Penitents through our Lord Jesus Christ, yet he did not ordain, and appoint, and decree sin to this end: for vindictive justice and pardoning mercy are but secondary Attributes of the Divine Nature, and therefore God cannot primarily design the glorifying of them; for that cannot be without primarily designing the

the sin and misery of his Creatures, which would be inconsistent with the goodness and holiness of his Nature. Thus Nature and Revelation teaches, though these men pretend to have learn't otherwise from an acquaintance with Christ.

Thus much for the knowledge of our selves with respect to sin, *which is hid only in the Lord Jesus*. But then we learn what our righteousness is, wherewith we must appear before God from an acquaintance with Christ. We have already learnt, how unable we are to make atonement for our sins, without which they can never be forgiven, and how unable we are to do any thing that is good: and yet nothing can deliver us from the justice and wrath of God, but a full satisfaction for our sins, and nothing can give us a title to a reward, but a perfect and unspotted righteousness; what shall we do in this Case? how shall we escape Hell, or get to Heaven, when we can neither expiate for our past sins, nor do any good for the time to come? why here we are relieved again by an acquaintance with Christ: his Death expiates former iniquities, and

removes the whole guilt of sin: but *this is not enough, that we are not guilty; we must also be actually righteous; not only all sin is to be answered for, but all righteousness is to be fulfilled.* Now this righteousness we find only in Christ, *We are reconciled to God by his Death, and saved by his life, that actual obedience he yielded to the whole law of God, is that righteousness, whereby we are saved: we are innocent by vertue of his Sacrifice and expiation, and righteous with his righteousness.*

P. 117.

- Now this is a mighty comfortable
- discovery, how we may be righteous
- without doing any thing that is good, or righteous. And I confess we could never have known this but by an acquaintance with his Person; for his Gospel makes a different representation of it; tells us expressly, that he is righteous, who doth righteousness, that without holiness no man shall see God: that the only way to obtain the pardon of our sins is to repent of them, and forsake them; and the only thing that gives a right to the promises of future glory, is to obey the Laws, and imitate the example of our Saviour, and to be transformed into the nature
and

and likeness of God: and though our obedience be not in every thing exact and perfect, if it be sincere, we shall be accepted for the sake of Christ, and by vertue of that Covenant of Grace, which he hath sealed with his blood, which admits of an Evangelical, instead of a strict legal perfection: such different discoveries doth an acquaintance with the Gospel, and with the Person of Christ, make.

The third part of our Wisdom is to walk with God, and to that is required Agreement, acquaintance, a way, strength, boldness, and aiming at the same end: and all these with the Wisdom of them are hid in the Lord Jesus. The sum of which in short is this, that Christ having expiated our sins, and fulfilled all righteousness for us, though we have no personal righteousness of our own, but are as contrary to God, as darkness is to light, and death to life, and an universal pollution and defilement to an universal and glorious holiness, and hatred to love; yet the righteousness of Christ is a sufficient, nay the only foundation of our agreement, and upon that, of our walking with God: though St. John tells us, *If we say we*

56 *Of acquaintance with the Person of Christ.*
have fellowship with him, and walk in
darkness we lye, and do not the truth, but
if we walk in the light, as God is in the
light, then have we fellowship one with
another, and (then) the blood of Jesus
Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sins.
John I. Ch. I. v. 6, 7. And our only
acquaintance with God and knowledge
of him is hid in Christ, which his word
and works could not discover, as you
heard above. And he is the only way,
wherein we must walk with God, and
we receive all our strength from him;
and he makes us bold and confident
too, having removed the guilt of sin,
that now we may look Justice in the
face, and *whet our Knife at the Counter*
door, all our Debts being discharged
by Christ, as these bold acquaintance
and familiars of Christ use to speak.
And in Christ we design the same end
that God doth, which is the *advance-*
ment of his own glory: that is, I sup-
pose, by trusting to the expiation and
righteousness of Christ for Salvation,
without doing any thing our selves,
we take care that God shall not be
robbed of the glory of his free Grace
by a competition of any merits and de-
serts of our own:

These

These are those great *Gospel Mysteries and Soul-saving truths*, which are learnt from an acquaintance with Christ's Person, which his Gospel is so silent in, or speaks so darkly and imperfectly of, that it was impossible to understand them, without being first acquainted with his Person. And that you may the better understand the whole design and contrivance of it, I shall put every thing into its just and natural order ;

God then from the beginning designed to glorifie his justice, and his mercy, and because there had been no occasion either to punish or pardon, unless man had sinned, he *appointed and ordained sin for the glory of his vindictive justice and pardoning Grace*: and accordingly (since nothing can withstand the Decrees and appointments of God) it pleaseth God that Man should sin ; but when he hath sinned he is extreamly displeas'd with it, and now his Justice must be satisfied ; for it is impossible for God to forgive the the least sin without a compleat and perfect satisfaction ; this falls hard upon those miserable wretches, whose ill fortune it was, without any faults of theirs,

theirs, to be left out of the Roll of Election, and who have no way to satisfy the Divine Justice, but by their Eternal Torments; by this it appears, how rigorously just God is, that he will never pardon the least sin, when he can serve his own glory by the misery and confusion of Sinners:

But this is but one part of the glory of God, to be just in punishing sin, the other is to shew mercy in sparing and rewarding the Sinner; now here was the great difficulty, how God should be just, and merciful too, when Justice requires a full satisfaction, and mercy excludes all desert. For the demerit of sin being infinite, no Creature can expiate sin, but by enduring infinite, that is endless Torments; and those who must be always miserable, can never be the subjects of God's mercy.

To unite these two extreams, and reconcile such contradictions, was a work of infinite Wisdom, as well as goodness; And it was effected thus. God sends his only begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ into the World to fulfil all righteousness in his life, and to make a full satisfaction for sin by his
Death.

Death. For his blood being of infinite value (as being the blood of the Son of God) could expiate an infinite guilt, and so make a compleat satisfaction to Justice; which is more glorified by the Death of Christ, than by the Eternal miseries of all the Sinners in the World, because it discovers the naturalness of Justice to God (which is the *Position* to be maintain'd) that he could not pardon without full satisfaction, that is, that he is so just, that he hath not one dram of goodness in him, till his rage and vengeance be satisfied; which is I confess a glorious kind of Justice:

But now *the Justice and vengeance of God having their actings assigned them to the full*, being glutted and satiated with the blood of Christ; God may pardon as many and great sins, as he pleases, without fear of the least imputation of injustice: and now a glorious and more comfortable Scene of mercy begins to appear; now God embraces Sinners, as a kind Father, and accounts them perfectly innocent in vertue of that satisfaction Christ hath made for their sins; but this is not enough, the law of God must be fulfilled,

60 *Of acquaintance with the Person of Christ.*
filled, as well as his justice satisfied, we must be righteous, as well as innocent, otherwise we may escape punishment, but can expect no reward (though I confess, I should have thought, that Christ had satisfied for sins of omission, together with sins of Commission: and as by his satisfaction for our doing, what we ought not to do, we are reputed by God as having never done any thing amiss, so by his satisfaction for our neglecting what we ought to have done, we might by the same reason be reputed by God perfectly righteous, to have done all, that we ought, to have kept the whole Law, but it seems this was not sufficient): and therefore as the satisfaction of Christ is imputed to us for the forgiveness of sins, so the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us to make us perfectly righteous; and this makes the Grace of God perfectly free without any suspicion of merit or desert in us.

And now God and Sinners may agree very well and walk comfortably together, for though *they* have guilt enough, and *he* Justice enough to destroy a World, yet there is no danger,

ger, since Christ hath satisfied Justice; and though he be infinitely holy and pure, perfect light, and Sinners abominably filthy, yet there is no fear he should loath and abhor them, when they are Cloathed with the white and spotless Robes of Christs righteousness; and they are so well acquainted now with the design of God to advance the glory of his free Grace in their Salvation, that they are very secure, that neither their past sins, nor present habitual impurities can do them any hurt: but they *shall be saved with a notwithstanding their sins.*

These are those fundamental Doctrines, with which these men have blessed the World from a pretended acquaintance with Christ's Person, which are so unlike the *holy Religion of our Saviour*, that for distinction sake, it ought to be called the *Religion of Christ's Person*, in opposition to the Religion of his Gospel.

And since we have discovered the Principles of this new Religion of Christ's Person, I cannot forbear inquiring briefly into the practical inferences from it, that we may at once view the grand Mystery of this Religion

62 *Of acquaintance with the Person of Christ.*
gion both in its principles and practice.

Now the practice of this Religion consists in accepting of Christ, and coming to him, and applying his merits and satisfaction, and righteousness to our selves, for pardon and justification; and in those duties which are consequent upon such an Union and closure with Christ. For Christ having satisfied for our sins, and fulfilled the righteousness of the law for us, it is a plain and necessary consequence, that we have nothing to do, but to get an interest in the satisfaction and righteousness of Christ, that they may be imputed to us; for he is very ignorant of Christ, who hopes that any thing else will avail him to Salvation.

Now that we may thus come to Christ and close with him, it is absolutely necessary, that we be sensible of our lost and undone condition out of Christ. How impossible it is for us to atone the wrath of God, or to have any righteousness of our own, which can bear the severe scrutiny of his justice; and in a sense of this we must work our imagination and fancy into great terrours and agonies, and a dis-

mal fear of the unsupportable wrath of God, and his natural and inexorable justice: this is the spirit of bondage, which we must lie under, before we can attain to the Spirit of Adoption: for we shall never value and prize Christ, and go to him for Salvation, till we are convinc'd of our necessity of him, and driven to him by the threatnings and terrours of the Law; and the promise of ease and rest, is made only to the weary and heavy laden; and these only shall be satisfied, who hunger and thirst after the imputed righteousness of Christ.

And now being thus stung with sin, it is time for us to look up to Christ, as the *Israelites* did on the brazen Serpent, that we may be healed; now we must begin to see his fulness and perfection and suitableness to the wants and necessities of our Souls, that he is our atonement and expiation, our wisdom and righteousness, all that we can desire or need.

And if it should so happen, that the sense of our sins and unworthiness makes us afraid to come to Christ, and apply him to our Souls, we must then have recourse to our acquaintance
with

64 *Of acquaintance with the Person of Christ.*
 with the Person of Christ, to answer all our doubts, and quiet our Consciences. As for instance, *Dost thou object I am a great Sinner, and will Christ save me?* the Answer is easie, *whom did Christ come to save? whom doth God justifie but the ungodly? did he take our flesh upon him, and not our sins? balance all things together, your sins and Christs merits together, and the greatness of your sins should not so much discourage you from coming to Christ, as the greatness of his merits should encourage you to come to him. For where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound. Compare your distress and Christ's compassion together, your wants and Christ's fulness together, your unworthiness and Christ's freeness together, your desires and Christ's invitations together, your own weakness and Christ's strength together, Satan's objections and Christ's answers together; and now if Christ do not prevail above all thy fears, thou art not worthy to be acquainted with him.*

*Shepards
 sound Be-
 liever p.
 80.*

Nay further, if thou objectest, what have I to do with Christ? why should he have to do with me; who have such an unholy, vile, hard, blind, and most wicked heart:

heart? (the objection you see is full and home to the purpose, but mark the answer) O! for the Lord's sake dishonour not the Grace of Christ, it is true, thou canst not come to Christ, till thou art laden, humble, and separated from thy sins --- yet remember for ever, that no more sorrow for sin, no more separation from sin, is necessary to thy closing with Christ, than so much, as makes thee willing, or rather not unwilling, that the Lord should take it away; and know, if thou seekest for a greater measure of humiliation, antecedent to thy closing with Christ, than this, thou showest the more pride therein, who wilt rather go into thy self to make thy self holy and humble, that thou maist be worthy of Christ, than go out of thy self unto the Lord Jesus to take away thy sin; In a word, who thinkest, Christ cannot love thee, until thou makest thy self fair, and when thou thinkest thy self so (which is pride) wilt thou think otherwise of Christ.

And now the reason of all this is very plain from our acquaintance with Christ; for he is our Physician, and therefore we must not think of healing our selves, but must go to him with all

66 *Of acquaintance with the Person of Christ.*
our Diseases and Sores about us, that he alone may have the honour of healing us. He is a Fountain set open for sin and for uncleanness, and therefore we must go to him with all our filthiness to be cleansed and washed, for if we be first clean, there is no need of a Fountain. He is all fulness, and therefore it is not fit we should carry any thing to him, as if he needed any thing from us. He is our Righteousness, and therefore if we have any, we must leave all our righteousness behind us, when we go to him. He is all beauty and loveliness, and therefore we must not carry any beauty to him, but receive it all from him; So that all we have to do in this great work, is to go to Christ weary, and sick, and filthy, and naked, stript of every thing, but our sins and impurities, to receive ease and health, and fulness, and beauty from him. Christ is the gift of God, and therefore we must only receive him by the hand of Faith, and apply him to our Souls, and then what a blessed change and Metamorphosis is there presently made in us! for though we continue as we were, yet we have all in Christ. We
are

are now united to him, and made his Members and Spouse, and so have an interest in all his merits and fulness.

* *Christ saith to a believer with my body,* * *Watson's*
yea with my blood I endowe thee, and a *Christ's*
Believer saith to Christ, with my Soul I *Loveliness.*
thee worship (as if Christ and a Be- *pag. 462.*

liever were married by the Liturgy.)

And now a Sinner may with the greatest confidence look Justice in the face, as being out of its reach. *A soul in*

Christ is actually united to him, and

One with him, and being so, no sentence

of condemnation can fall on him, but

the same must light upon Christ himself,

(and who would desire to be more

secure than Christ is) *as a Woman in*

marriage, though she owe never so many

debts, yet the arrest doth not light upon

her, but upon her Husband: O blessed

priviledge! and who would be afraid

of running into debt with God, when

he hath such a Husband to discharge

all. And then how vile and impure

soever men are, *here is their comfort* *Watson's*

when they are married to Christ, this is *Christ's*

their glorious priviledge, Christ's beauty *Loveliness.*

and loveliness shall be put upon them; his *p. 467.*

lilly whiteness shall be put upon the saints.

And to Crown all, when they are once

68 *Of acquaintance with the Person of Christ.*

*Watson's
Christian
Character,
p. 60.*

thus engrafted into Christ, and made his Spouse, and Members of his body, they are secure to Eternity. For nothing that ever was a Member, can be lost to Eternity; for is Christ divided? can he lose a Member of his body? then his body is not perfect. No, no, fear not O ye Saints, neither sin, nor Satan, can dissolve your Union with Christ (but what if sin should make them no Saints, would not that endanger the dissolving of this Union?) For as the same Author sweetly reasons, if any branch be pluckt away from Christ, it is either because Christ is not able to keep it, or because he is willing to lose it (and why not, because it will not stay?) he is able surely to keep it, for he is strengthened with the Godhead, and he is not willing to lose it; for why then should he shed his blood for it. And as another great acquaintance of Christs speaks, Weakness (that is no strength, no Grace, no nor so much as sense of poverty) do not debar us from God's mercy, and the reason is very precious and convincing; for the Husband is bound to bear with the Wife as the weaker Vessel, and shall we think God will exempt himself from his own Rules, and not bear with his

*The Spiritu-
al Vine.
p. 167.*

*Shepards
sincere Con-
vert. p. 77.*

his

his weak spouse. Christ hath taken upon him to purge his spouse, and make her fit for himself; so that if she be not purged, and cleansed, and made fair and lovely, whose fault can it be but his own, and surely that can be no just reason for a divorce. Thus you see, what it is to come to Christ, and accept of him, and close with him; the result of which is (so far as I can understand it) to be content to be saved by Christ without being either humble or holy, fair or beautiful, any otherwise, than as he is pleased to make us so, by his satisfaction for our sins, and the imputation of his righteousness to us.

Let us now consider what duties are consequent upon such a union and closure of the Soul with Christ, and they are *consequential, conjugal affections*. As first a mighty love for her Saviour, and head, and Husband: the Soul must be enamoured with the beauty, and loveliness, and preciousness of Christ, must form pleasant and charming ideas of him, and feel great ravishments and transports of passion for him: *You must be sick of love to Christ, O ye Saints! and let him lye as a bundle of Myrrhe al-*

Watson's
Christ's
Loveliness.
p. 462.

ways between your Breasts; Christ is maximè diligibilis (as the Schoolmen speak.) he is the very abstract and Quintessence of beauty, he is a whole Paradise of delight, he is the flower of Sharon enriched with orient Colours, and perfumed with the sweetest savour, O wear this flower not in your bosoms, but in your hearts, and be always smelling to it, and show your love to this lovely Saviour. You must delight in his embraces, and thirst after a more intimate acquaintance with him, you must never be satisfied one moment without him, but must follow him from one Ordinance to another, and never be satisfied unless you meet with Christ, and enjoy Communion with him in Ordinances: this is the Foundation of the Saints love to Ordinances, that there they meet with the beloved of their Souls, and enjoy the sweet caresses and endearments of his love; there they hear of his beauty, and loveliness, and riches, and fulness, and allsufficiency, and though Evangelical truths will not down with a natural heart, such an one had rather hear some quaint point of some vertue or vice stood upon, than any thing in Christ, yet when the

Grace

Grace of God hath altered him, than of all truths the truths of Christ savour best, those truths that come out of the mouth of Christ, and out of the Ministry concerning Christ, they are most sweet of all. Such sanctified Souls and Ears loath all dull, insipid, moral discourses, which are perpetually inculcating their duty on them, and troubling them with a great many rules and directions for a good life; which he is pleas'd to call the *quaint Points of Vertue and Vice*; for this is not to enjoy Christ in Ordinances, they go away from such entertainment without having met with the beloved of their Soul, without hearing any news from him, or having the least glympse of his beauty and perfections; which is a plain contradiction to the nature and design of Ordinances, which are only for our enjoyment of Communion with Jesus Christ. That is, to unload our Consciences, and disburden our sins on him in our Confessions, and to beg of him the imputation of his righteousness to make us lovely, and to put our Souls into some raptures, and amorous passions to him, and to hear some good news from him by his Ministers, how

much he loves us, and longs after us, how pittiful he is to us, ready to overlook all our miscarriages, and cover all our deformities with his own beauty and loveliness, and to take us to the enjoyment of himself, that where he is, we also may be, perpetually to behold his glory, and solace our selves in his love :

Secondly, another consequential conjugal Act is obedience to our spiritual Husband, a duty which few Wives care for; and the truth is, though the Gospel of Christ be very plain and express in exacting this from them, and inculcates it so much, that it savours too strong of a legal spirit and dispensation, yet it is very hard to find a proper place for it in this new Religion, or to deduce it from an acquaintance with Christs Person.

For this is not necessary at all to our coming to Christ, and closing with him, nay it is a great hindrance to it, for we must bring nothing to Christ with us, the marriage is consummated without it, and then we have less need of it than before; for then we are adorned with the beauty of Christ, are holy with his holiness, we are delivered
from

from the guilt of sin by his expiation, he must look to it to see the debt discharged, which he hath now taken upon himself, and we are righteous with his righteousness, which gives us an actual right to glory, and we need no righteousness of our own to save us, which were to suppose a defect in the righteousness of Christ; so that, how obedience should come in, is hard to say. It is concluded on all hands by those, who are most intimately acquainted with the Person of Christ, that it is but a consequential duty, that which ought to follow our Espousals with Christ, and Justification by him, as a fruit and effect of it; but yet the reason of it is not evident. Some tell us, that it is due upon account of gratitude and thankfulness to our Saviour, which I cannot so well understand, unless our righteousness and obedience be due to Christ in thankfulness to him for saving us without obedience and righteousness, which is just as broad as long, and we get nothing by the bargain. Especially considering that this is hardly reconcileable with that essential condition of accepting Christ, wherein these spiritual Espousals consist.

Viz.

Viz. That the Soul consents to take Christ on his own terms, to save him in his own way, and saith, Lord, I would have had thee and salvation in my way, that it might have been partly of mine endeavours, and as it were by the works of the Law (that is, by obeying the Laws of the Gospel) but I am now willing to receive thee, and to be saved in thy way, merely by Grace: that is, without doing any thing, without obeying thee; the most contented Spouse certainly that ever was in the world, to submit to such hard conditions, as to be saved for nothing; but what a pretty complement doth the Soul make to Christ after all this, when she adds, And though I would have walk't according to my own mind, yet now I wholly give up my self to be ruled by thy spirit. But the mystery of this will appear in what follows: for others make obedience necessary upon account of our participation of Christs fulness, for this is one part of his fulness, a power and ability to do the will of God, and this proves that it will be so, but makes it no otherwise necessary to us, than as we are necessarily passive in it, and this is all the Soul means in giving it

it self up to be ruled by the spirit of Christ, to be passively, not actively good, to submit (as needs it must) to the irresistible working of the Divine Spirit, and to obey, when it can rebel no longer.

Thus, Reader, I have given thee an entire Scheme of a new Religion, resulting from an acquaintance with Christ's Person, in all its fundamental Principles, and practices; here is every jot and tittle of reason, it is founded on, or pretends to, and the most obvious and easie connexion of one part with another, whereby thou maist easily judge of the whole fabrick and contrivance; and I think there needs no more to expose it to the scorn of every considering man, who cannot but discover, how inconsistent the Religion of Christ's Person, and of his Gospel are: this is that knowledge of Christ these men glory in, as containing greater Mysteries and more Soul-saving truths, than are revealed in the Gospel.

SECT.

S E C T. III.

How unsafe it is to found Religion upon a pretended acquaintance with Christ's Person.

HAVING thus shewed you what that Religion is, which these men pretend to learn from an acquaintance with Christ's Person, it is time now to consider this way of Reasoning, and shew you what an unsafe foundation it is to build any Religion on.

And first, this is at best to build Religion upon uncertain conjectures, or ambiguous and doubtful reasons; for suppose men were wary and cautious in drawing conclusions from the Person of Christ, (which few of these men are) yet what assurance can they have, that their inferences are true: Had we seen Christ in the flesh, and been witnesses of the many miracles he wrought, of his Death upon the Cross, and his resurrection from the dead, had he not acquainted us with the end and design of all this, we might have guesst, and guesst, till we had been weary, but
it

It is great odds we had never guessed right, or at best could never have been secure we had.

We may understand necessary causes from necessary effects, and necessary effects from necessary causes; if we see a fire we know it burns something, and if we see smoak, we may safely conclude, there is some fire; but where the connexion of the effect with the cause is not necessary, but arbitrary, both not depend upon the nature of things, but the institution and appointment of free Agents, we can understand no more of the design, than the principal Agent is pleased to tell us. This is the case here: Christs coming into the World, and all that he did and suffered for us, is the pure effect of God's free Grace, and the design of his unsearchable Wisdom and Council, and therefore none can understand the reason and contrivance of this, but he who lay in the bosom of his Father, and those who learn from him: so that whoever would understand the Religion of our Saviour must learn it from his Doctrine, not from his Person; because there is not a natural and necessary connexion between the Person of
Christ,

Christ, and what he did and suffered, and the Salvation of Mankind: the Incarnation, and Life, and Death, and Resurrection of Christ were available to those ends, for which God designed them, but the vertue and efficacy of them doth depend upon Gods institution and appointment, and therefore can be known only by Revelation.

When we are acquainted by Christ, for what end he came into the World, and suffered, and died, and rose again, we may discover the Wisdom and goodness of God in it, in sending us such a Saviour, and qualifying him in so excellent a manner for the work of our Redemption; but we cannot safely draw any one conclusion from the Person of Christ, which his Gospel hath not expressly taught, because we can know no more of the design of it, than what is there revealed.

And is it not intolerable presumption for men to mould and shape Religion according to their fancies and humours, and to stuff it with an infinite number of Orthodox propositions, none of which are to be found in express terms in Scripture, but are only pre-tended to be deduced from thence by such

such imaginary consequences, from some little hints and appearances of things? Especially, is not this unpardonable in those men, who cry down reason for such a prophane and carnal thing, as must not presume to intermeddle in holy matters, and yet lay the foundation of their Religion, and erect such glorious and magnificent Fabricks, on nothing else but some little hews and appearances of Reason? But the plain truth is this, when men argue from the nature of God, and his Works and Providences, from the nature of Mankind, and those eternal notions of good and evil, and the essential differences of things, that is, when men argue from plain and undeniable Principles, which have an immutable and unchangeable nature, and so can bear the stress and weight of a just consequence, this is carnal Reason; but when men argue from fancies and imaginations, which have no stable nature, from some pretty Allusions, and Similitudes, and Allegories, which have no certain shape, nor form, but what every mans fancy gives them, this is sanctified and spiritual reason, but why I cannot imagine, unless that
it

it so much resembles Ghosts and shadows, which have nothing solid and substantial in them.

Secondly, How dangerous this way of reasoning from an acquaintance with Christ's Person is, appears in this, that it will serve any mans turn, who hath any quickness and vigour of fancy. It is an easie matter at this rate to set up the trade of making new Hypotheses of Religion. I have already given you one draught and Scheme of Religion from a pretended acquaintance with Christs Person, and it were easie to present you with many more, with as fair colours and pretences, and as exact and regular proportions, and fanciful consequences, and artificial connexions; I need not tell you, what use all our Allegorical Divines would make of this, who have the peculiar knack and gift of adapting every similitude and resemblance, to what purposes they please: We know how the Valentinians of old perverted all the passages of our Saviours Life and Death by such fanciful applications to confirm the doctrine of their *Æones*, and the portentous production of their Gods, and to patronize all their vilest practices;

practices; and if we allow of this way, I know not, why one mans fancy should not be admitted as well as anothers. But to shew how easily this acquaintance with Christs Person may be made to serve different purposes, I shall oppose another Scheme of Religion, which is much more plainly deducible from an acquaintance with Christs Person, to what these men advance for the great Mystery of the Gospel, and the only spiritual Wisdom; And thus I argue.

Since we see the Eternal Son of God leave his Fathers Throne, and condescend to come into the World in the nature and likeness of a man, we may certainly conclude, that it was upon a design of love and goodness; for had he intended to destroy the World, he would have Cloathed himself with thunder and lightning, he would have appeared like himself with an awful and astonishing Majesty, and with all the terrible solemnities of vengeance and judgment, incircled with Legions of Angels, and with Clouds of smoak and fire: but we now see nothing dreadful in his looks, nor in his Conversation, he was made a Man, as we are,

which argues a good will and kindness to humane Nature, he had all the sweetness of innocence, and an obliging goodness, that we have no reason to suspect any ill design under so charming and inviting an appearance, his miracles were great and glorious, but not frightful and astonishing, they surprized with wonder, not with terror and fear: his Almighty Power was displayed and manifested in methods of love and kindness, in healing the sick, and dispossessing Devils, in feeding the hungry, and raising the dead, not in over-turning Kingdoms and Empires, or bringing fire from Heaven to consume his Enemies. From all this we may safely conclude, that he came upon an Embassy of Peace, to assure the World of Gods good will towards them, and to reconcile the differences between God and Men.

And when we consider further, that this Heavenly Embassador and Mediator is no less than the Eternal Son of God, by whom the Worlds were made, we may reasonably conclude, that he came upon no less design, than of universal goodness, for he can have no temptation to partiality, as being
equally

equally concerned in the happiness of all men, and we cannot imagine, why he should lay a narrower design of love in the redemption, than in the Creation of Mankind; that when in the first Creation he designed all men for happiness, in this new and second Creation, he should design, and intend the happiness only of some few, which is to make him less good in redeeming, than in creating Mankind, though Creation cost him no more than the exercise of his power, but redemption the expence of his blood: no sure, his goodness did not become less infinite and boundless, when he became man; the design of his appearing was to restore Mankind to that honour, and happiness, and immortality, they had lost; and to repair the sullied glory of the first Creation by making all things new again.

Thus when we consider the innocence and holiness of his life, that he was a great example of an unaffected piety towards God, and all the virtues of an innocent and useful Conversation with men, we may reasonably conclude, that his great design was to reform the debauched manners of the

World, to reduce Mankind to the obedience of God, to teach man how to live as well as talk, and to restore the practice of piety, and justice, of meekness, and humility, and an universal good will, which had been banished out of the World by the Hypocritical pretences of a more refined sanctity in washing hands and Dishes, in tithing Mint and Cumming, and such like pieces of legal and Ceremonial Righteousness; But now our Saviour by his example as well as laws, taught us another Lesson, that as we lost our happiness at first by sin, so the way to regain the favour of God, and an immortal life, is by the practice of a sincere and universal righteousness. He came to be our example and guide to Heaven as well as our Mediator and Advocate, and therefore we must imitate his life, if we would enjoy the benefits of his Death and Intercession; for so holy a Person can never be the Patron of Vice, nor an Advocate for impenitent and incorrigible Sinners.

When we remember, that Christ died as a Sacrifice and propitiation for sin, this gives us a great demonstration of Gods good will to us, how ready he

he is to pass by all our former sins, in that he hath appointed an atonement for us, and given no less person, than his own Son, for our ransom, which is the greatest assurance God could give us of his readiness to accept of true Penitents, and therefore the most powerful motive and encouragement to return to our duty.

And besides this, the death of Christ assures us, what the desert of sin is, and what will be the portion of all impenitent Sinners: for in that he required the death of his own Son to be an atonement for sin, he hath plainly declared, that all Sinners deserve to die, and that none shall escape this just Condemnation, but those, who are washed and purified in the blood of Christ: He will not pardon sin without a Sacrifice, nor accept of any other atonement, but the death of his Son, and accept of that for none, but those, who believe and obey the Gospel; and if God did not think fit to save true Penitents without a ransom, where shall the Sinner and ungodly appear. So that though we do not pretend to understand the strict Philosophy of that atonement made by Christ, yet we may

easily learn all that is useful and necessary for us to know; that Christ's Death and Sacrifice for sin Seals the Covenant of Grace and pardon to all penitent and reformed Sinners, and seals the irrevocable decree of Reprobation against all others; for that Covenant, which is sealed with the blood of so great and stupendious a Sacrifice, must needs be irrevocable and Eternal.

- In the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, and his Ascension into Heaven, we have an ocular demonstration of the rewards of holiness and obedience, that for the innocence and purity of his life, and the humility and obedience of his Death, he is now exalted to the right hand of God, and cloathed with Majesty and Glory. That Power and Authority, he is now invested with, secures us of the prevalency of his intercession, of his constant care and providence over his Church, of the influences of his Grace, and the supply of all our spiritual wants, and of that glory and happiness, to which he will advance us at the last day.

All this we learn from an acquaintance
tance

tance with Christ's Person (as these men call it) and it were easie now to draw the whole plot and design of Christianity, to search into the deep Councils of God, and to discover those principles and motives, he was acted by, and the infinite Wisdom of the contrivance, and the true methods of a Sinners recovery by Christ, and what that homage and worship is, which we owe our Saviour.

As to make some short Essay of it. Those natural notions, which we have of God, acquaint us, that he is infinitely good, and the History of the Creation assures us, that God made the World to be an image and representation of his own glory and perfections, but especially Man, who was made after the image of God, and endowed with that Wisdom and Knowledge, and all those Principles of Piety and Vertue, which would have made him a living and active image of the Divine perfections. This was the glory and the happiness of his nature to know God, and to be like him, to praise and adore his great Benefactor, and to be inseperably united to him by those natural tyes of love and obedience.

dience. For nothing else can be the
 happiness of a reasonable Creature,
 but Conformity to the Divine Nature,
 which is the pattern and measure of all
 rational perfections and happiness. And
 therefore when Mankind apostatized
 from God, they miserably defeated
 the end of their Creation, and inter-
 cepted those natural Communications
 of the divine goodness, by making
 themselves unworthy and incapable of
 them: and now we may easily ima-
 gine, how much a good God was grie-
 ved, and offended with this, not as a
 haughty and Imperious Prince would
 be with the miscarriages and rebellion
 of his Subjects, but as a kind Father is
 displeas'd and griev'd for the disobe-
 dience of his Children, for their re-
 fractory and unmanageable temper; not
 so much as an affront and contempt
 of his own Authority, but as it is a
 necessary cause of the ruine and mi-
 sery of his Children, whose happi-
 ness he so passionately desires and de-
 signs.

This made the divine goodness so
 restlessly zealous and concerned for the
 recovery of Mankind; various ways
 he attempted in former Ages, but

* with

* with little success, as I observed before: but at last God sent his own Son our Lord Jesus Christ into the World to be the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls, to seek and to save that which was lost.

** Of the Knowledge of Christ, p. 19.*

And that we may be able in some measure to comprehend the infinite Wisdom and goodness of this contrivance, and how well the means is fitted to the end, we must consider that the whole Mystery of the recovery of mankind consists only in repairing the Divine Image, which was defaced by sin; that is in making all men truly good and vertuous. Sin is our apostasie from God, and doth as naturally make us miserable, as it makes us unlike the most happy Being. But holiness restores us to our Primitive State, to the perfect constitution of our Natures, and makes us good, and therefore happy, as God is.

And this was the great difficulty to persuade men to be good, to work upon the different tempers, and inclinations, and passions, of mankind, and to reduce them to the forfaken and untrodden paths of vertue: and though the laws and precepts, the great promises

mises and threatnings of the Gospel confirmed by so many stupendious miracles, and by the resurrection of Christ from the Dead, have in themselves a mighty power to reform the World, yet the consideration of Christ's Person, of what he did, and suffered for us gives a peculiar force and energy to them.

Sin and guilt makes men fearful, and it makes them disingenuous, they are apt to distrust goodness or to abuse it: will either believe God implacable, which makes them desperate, because there is no hope of pardon; or believe him to be fond and indulgent, which makes them saucy and presumptuous; and to prevent both these extreams of superstition, which are such profest Enemies to a sincere and unaffected Religion, God sent his own Son into the World, and by the greatness of his Person, and the manner and circumstances of his appearance, did confute them both.

If guilt make us afraid of God as an angry and severe judge, behold here the distance taken away in the Incarnation of the Son of God, who condescended to come down to us cloathed
with

with our nature, as a mild and a gentle Prince, by all the methods of love and sweetness to reduce us to our Allegiance and subjection to God; in him we see the good will of God to Sinners, here is a demonstration of condescending goodness, which stooped as low as earth, and did not disdain the nature and appearance of a man, nor the Conversation of Sinners, nor the shame of the Cross, nor the pale terrors and agonies of Death and the Grave.

And to remove all possible suspicion concerning Gods love to Sinners, the Son of God dies as a Sacrifice for our sins, to make atonement for us, and with his blood Seals the Covenant of Grace and Pardon, and all the promises of Eternal life. And still to give us the greater security of the performance of all this, our dying and suffering Lord is raised again from the dead, and advanced to the right hand of power and Majesty to intercede for us.

Thus God deals with us after the manner of men, and to encourage us to return to our duty, hath given us all the security of our acceptance, that
guilt

guilt it self (though infinitely jealous and suspicious) could desire: for what could we wish for more, than that God should send so great and so beloved a Person to us on an Embassy of Peace, than that the Son of God should be our propitiation and Advocate, our Lord and Judge, he who took our nature and our infirmities on him, who knows our weakness and our temptations, who died to expiate our sins, and is entred into the Holy of Holies to intercede for us in the vertue of his blood, and in the power of his glory, and the triumphs of his Conquests, and with a tender and compassionate sense of our infirmities.

But then on the other hand to cure our presumption, that we may not think God to be so easie, as to be reconciled to Sinners, and to their vices together; the death of Christ upon the Cross assures us, what the merit is, and what the portion of sin shall be; that all Sinners deserve to die, and shall certainly have their deserts without a sincere repentance and reformation of their lives; for to expiate sin by death can signifie no less than this, that death is the proper recompence of sin,

in, and therefore that those sins which are not expiated by the Sacrifice of Christ (as none are, till we repent and reform) shall certainly be expiated by the Death of the Sinner. Especially considering how holy our Priest and sacrifice was, we cannot reasonably conceive, that he died, or that he intercedes for incorrigible Sinners. The sacrifice of his Death extends no farther, than the example of his life, *he was made manifest to destroy sin, and in him was no sin.*

Now though I dare not be so bold as to say, what infinite Wisdom can do, yet it is not imaginable, how God could have contrived a more effectual way to reform the World, which contains so many powerful obligations, such forceable endearments, such ravishing charms; which makes such a pleasant and inviting representation of God to the World, which so confirms our Faith, and encourages our hopes, and enflames our love, and awakens our fears, and excites our emulation, which doth even affect our senses with the arguments of Religion, and storm the lower and more brutish faculties of our Souls, and captivate them to
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the love and obedience of Christ.

From hence it is easie to understand, what is the true method of a Sinners recovery by Christ, and what returns of love and gratitude we owe our Lord and Saviour. When we are so affected with all the powerful arguments to a new life, which are contained in his Incarnation, and life, and doctrine, and example, and miracles, and death, and resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven, and his Intercession for us, as to be sensible of the shame and folly of sin, and to be reconciled to the love and practice of true piety and holiness, then we partake in the merits of his Sacrifice, and find the benefit of his Intercession, and have a title to all the blessings, and promises of his Gospel: this was the design of Christ's coming into the World not to distract our guilty minds with the terrours of the Law, and the inexorable justice of God, not to bring us under a Legal dispensation of fear and bondage, but to encourage us to forsake our sins, and reform our lives, by all the endearments of love and goodness, and the lively hopes of a blessed Immortality, mixt with an awful regard and Reverence

rence for God, who is a holy and righteous Judge, and an irreconcilable Enemy to all sin. This is such a method of converting Sinners, as is proper to the Person of Christ, and the manner of his appearance, which was not designed to cause tempests and Earthquakes in our minds, like the Thunder and Lightning from Mount *sinai*, but to work a reformation in the World by more silent and gentle methods, and in more humane ways. If our Faith in Christ have reformed our lives, and rectified the temper and disposition of our minds, and made us sincere Lovers of God and goodness, though we are not acquainted with these artificial methods of repentance, have not felt the workings of the Law, nor the amazing terrours of Gods wrath, nor the raging despair of damned Spirits, and then all on a sudden (as if we had never heard of any such thing before) have had Christ offered to us to be our Saviour, and heard the voings and beseechings of Christ to accept of him, and upon this have made a formal contract and espousal with Christ, and such like working of a heated fancy, and religious distraction, though

though our conversion be not managed with so much art and method, and by so many steps and gradations, we are never the worse Christians for want of it. For indeed this must needs be the effect of ignorance, not of an acquaintance with Christ, which suggests so many encouraging considerations to return to God, as to a merciful and compassionate Father, and not to tremble at his presence, as a severe and inexorable judge.

And hence we learn, that the truest expression of love to our Saviour, is not some fond and amorous passions, but obedience to his Laws, and the greatest honour we can do him, is to imitate his example, and to express the power of his death and resurrection in the exemplary holiness of our lives; for this best answers the end of his coming into the World, is the fruit of his intercession for us, and the greatest glory and ornament of his spiritual Kingdom.

Thus I have given you a brief Scheme and Hypothesis of Religion from an acquaintance with Christs Person; and if they will owne this a safe way, to build Religion on an acquaintance

acquaintance with Christs Person, they must owne, what I have now discoursed, which is much more agreeable to the *Person of Christ*, and the design of his appearing, and more easily and naturally deduced from it, than their own wild and fantastical conceits. If they do not like this, I must advise them to quit this way, as the which will serve others as well as themselves, and let us all fetch our Religion from the plain Doctrines and Precepts of the Gospel of Christ, not from any pretended Personal Acquaintance with him.

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SECT.

S E C T. IV.

How men pervert the Scripture to make it comply with their fancies.

THere is a very obvious objection against this whole discourse, the answering of which will further discover the ill consequences of framing such fanciful *Ideas* of Religion from an acquaintance with Christ's Person ; And that is this, that though these men deduce their Religion from an acquaintance with Christ, yet there are no men, that so abound in Scripture proofs to confirm what they say, and therefore they do not lay the Foundation of their Religion on such uncertain conjectures ; and the truth is, if you consult these mens Writings, you shall find their Books stuffed with Scripture, or if you talk with them, their whole discourse is little else, but Scripture phrase : but that *Reverend Doctor* confessed the plain truth, that their Religion is wholly owing to *an acquaintance with the Person of Christ,*
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and could never have been *clearly* and *savingly* learn't from his *Gospel*, had they not first grown acquainted with his *Person*. And then it is no wonder, if they can accommodate Scripture expressions to their own dreams and fancies. For when mens fancies are so possessed with Schemes and *Ideas* of Religion, whatever they look on appears of the same shape and colour, where-with their minds are already tingured, like a man sick of the Jaundies, or that looks through a painted Glass, who seeth every thing of the same colour, that his eye or Glass gives it: all the Metaphors, and Similitudes, and Allegories of Scripture are easily applyed to their purpose; and if any word sound like the tinkling of their own fancies, It is no less than a demonstration, that that is the meaning of the Spirit of God, and every little shadow and appearance doth mightily confirm them in their pre-conceived opinions. As *Irenæus* observes of the *Valentinians*, that they used one Artifice or other to adapt all the speeches of our Saviour, and all the Allegories of Scripture *male composito phantasmati*, to the ill

contrived figment of their own brain: and thus the minds of men are abused with words and phrases, and the Scripture is prest to serve every new-fangled conceit in Religion.

The wildest and most extravagant opinions that were ever yet vented under the name of Religion, have pretended the authority of Scripture for their Patronage; though any unprejudiced man would wonder, how the reading such places of Scripture should suggest such notions to them: but this is no wonder, when we consider that men first contrive their Religion (as these *acquaintances* of Christ do) and possess their fancies throughly with their private opinions, and then read the Scripture with no other design, than to find something there to stamp Divinity on their own conceits. For it is easie to pervert the plainest sense, and by the help of a strong imagination to make any thing of any thing; such men dote upon words and phrases, metaphors, and allusions, as best fitted for their purpose, they found their Religion on obscure Texts, or Mystical interpretations of plain Texts, and by the help of some arbitrary distinctions,

tions, and limitations, glosses, and paraphrases, by curtailing of Texts, or transplacing words and comma's, or separating a single sentence from the body of the discourse, make the Scripture speak their sense as plainly, as the Bells ring, what every boy will have them. Which is to deal with the Scripture (as *Irenæus* observes) as if a man should take a Picture of the *King* which consisted of an artificial composition of precious stones, and transplace all these stones into another form, as suppose of an Ape, and then should persuade silly people, that that was the Kings Picture: At this rate we may find the *Alcoran* in the Bible, as well as make so many Books so different, and contrary to each other, from the various composition of twenty four Letters. This is plain and evident at the first proposal to any intelligent Reader, but to put it out of all doubt, I shall give you some Instances of it, and show you how these *familiar acquaintances of Christ* (and who may better make bold with him than they) take the liberty to pervert his Gospel to serve their opinion.

There are two ways of expounding

Scripture in great vogue among them. First, by the sound and clink of words and phrases, which is all some men understand by *keeping a form of sound words*. Secondly, when this will not do, they reason about the sense of Scripture from their own pre-conceived notions, and opinions, and prove that this must be the meaning of Scripture, because otherwise it is not reconcileable to their dreams, which is called expounding Scripture by the *Analogy of Faith*:

First, they expound Scripture by the sound of words and phrases, that is, if they can find any words in Scripture, which chime to the tune of their private conceits, without ever considering the use of the words in those places where they are found, they clap their own sense on them, and then they serve for very solid and substantial proofs. I shall give you several instances of this way.

Thus when men are possess'd with the fancy of *an acquaintance with Christs Person*, then to *know Christ* can signify nothing else, but to know his Person, and all his personal excellencies and beauties, fulness and preciousness,

&c.

Ec. and when Christ is said to be made *Wisdom to us*, this is a plain proof, that we must learn all our spiritual Wisdom from an acquaintance with his Person. Though some duller men can understand no more by it, than the Wisdom of those Revelations Christ hath made of Gods will to the World.

Thus when men have first learn't from an acquaintance with Christ to place all their hopes of Salvation in a *Personal Union* with Christ, from whom they receive the free Communications of Pardon and Grace, Righteousness and Salvation, what more plain proof can any man who is resolved to believe this, desire of it, than first *Ep. John 5. 12.* *He that hath the son hath life, and he that hath not the son, hath not life.* For what can *having the son* signifie, but having an Interest in him, being made one with him; though some will be so perverse as to understand it, of believing and obeying his Gospel; but the phrase of *Having the son* confutes that dull and moral interpretation, especially when we remember, that it is called being *In Christ* and *abiding in him*, which must signifie a very near Union between Christs Per-

son and us, such as there is between two things, which are within one another, which makes all Christ ours, and us Christs.

Now it is self evident, that before we can thus be united to Christ, we must go to him, and therefore *Faith*, which is the Instrument of this Union, is very luckily called *coming to Christ*: from whence it is very evident, that to believe in Christ is to go to him for Salvation, which Metaphors of coming and going are a very intelligible explication of believing. But when the Soul is come to Christ, is this enough? no surely, the Soul then must *receive Christ*, as Saint *John* tells us, *to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God. John I. 12.* That Faith, which serves us for legs to go to Christ, must be a hand to receive him, and to apply all his merits and fulness and righteousness to our Souls; and now when we have received him, we must embrace him in our arms too, *as good old Simeon did, when he found him in the Temple*, which is a little nearer Union; as plainly appears from the example of the *Patriarchs, who saw the promises afar off, and embraced*

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aced them. Hebr. 11. 13, and now we
ave Christ, we must trust, and lean
on him, as we are often commanded,
to trust in God, which signifies that Act
of Faith, whereby finding and feeling our
own weakness, as unable to support our
selves, we do lean and rest on Christ,
and if leaning be not enough, we may
make a little more bold, and rowl on
him, as appears from Psalm 37. 5. rowl
by ways on the Lord, as the Original
Gal signifies, which is that Act of Faith,
whereby we being laden with sin, and
seeking ease, we at last discharge our Load,
and cast it on Christ. And this is plain
from the phrase of believing In Christ,
and On Him. 1 Peter 2. 6. for what can
that signifie, but leaning and rowling
on Him, laying and building our selves
in him, as on a Foundation. And now
we have thus brought our Souls to
Christ, we must commit them to his
trust to take charge of them, and save
them, and if they perish, it will be his
fault, and he must give account of it.
Thus Saint Paul did 2 Tim. 1. 12. I
know whom I have believed, and I am
perswaded, that he is able to keep that,
which I have committed to him against
that day. And now we must hide our
selves

Watson's
Christ's
Loveli-
ness.

selves in Christ from the fierce wrath and displeasure of God, *as the Dove hides in the Rocks, Cant. 2. 14. O my Dove in the Clefts of the Rocks. Christ's wounds are the clefts of the rocks; where this believing Soul, Christ's Dove, hides it self.* And besides this, a Rock is a Screene to shade off the heat, so Christ is called *Isai. 32. 2. a shadow from the heat; he shades a poor Sinner from the scorchings of Gods wrath.* And then, *We must fetch comfort too from Christ, as honey came out of the Rock, Dent. 32. 13. he made him suck honey out of the Rock, and oyl out of the flinty Rock, the honey of the Promise, and the oyl of gladness comes out of this blessed Rock.*

Idem.

But this is not enough yet; for we must be cloathed with the Righteousness of Christ, as appears from that expression that we must put on Christ. *Rom. 13. 14. Gal. 3. 27.* which can signifie nothing else, but putting on Jesus Christ, that is his righteousness, as men put on a Garment to cover their nakedness, and to adorn them. *And therefore Christ is resembled to a beautiful Robe. Isai. 61. 10. He hath covered me with the Robe of Righteousness: His righteousness is a lovely Robe, no Robe of Gold or Ermin, wherewith*

Watson
Ibidem.

herewith Kings are invested, is so honourable as this. In this Robe we shine as Angels in Gods Eye; The High Priests glorious Vestments, Exod. 28. 2. The Tytre, the Robe, the Ephod of gold, and the Breast plate of precious stones, did all but serve to set out the beautiful Robes of Christs righteousness, wherewith a Believer is adorned: thus if we would get the blessing, we must go to God, as Jacob did in the Robes of our Elder brother, though I confess, this resemblance doth not very well please me; for though Jacob was a good man, yet this looks like a cunning trick, to rob his elder Brother of the blessing, and to cheat his blind Father, and men must not think that God is thus to be impos'd upon. But however that be, this is plain, that when we are thus united to Christ, and made one with him, then *all Christ is ours*, as the Apostle tells us, *All is yours, and you are Christs, and Christ is Gods*: The merit of his Death is ours to free us from the guilt and punishment of our sins, and his Active obedience to the will of God, his Righteousness is ours for our justification, as is plain, in that he is called the *Lord our Righteousness*, and is

said

said to be made unto us of God Righteousness. And as J. O. well observes, we are reconciled to God by the Death of his Son, and saved by his life, that is by the *Righteousness of his life*, which is made ours. *Rom. 5. 10.* And now what better proof can you desire for all this, if you will be contented with express words. Though I am very much of the Doctors mind, that we could never have discovered these mysteries clearly and savingly, had it not been for an acquaintance with Christs Person. No man would ever have dream't of such interpretations of Scripture, who had not been prepossess'd with the mysterious notion of a fanciful Union to Christ, and application of Christ to us: for here is no other proof of this, but words and phrases, separated from the body of the Text, and the design of the discourse, and like straglers pickt up, and listed into the service of their Hypothesis.

For indeed the whole mystery of this, and a great deal more stuff of this nature, consists in wresting metaphorical, and allusive expressions to a proper sense. When the Scripture describes the profession of Christianity, a sincere belief and obedience to the
 Gospel,

Gospel, by having Christ, and being in Christ, and coming to him, and receiving him, these men expound these phrases to a proper and natural sense, signifie, I know not what unintelligible Union, and spiritual progress and closure of the Soul with him; An Union of Persons, instead of an agreement in faith and manners. As will appear more hereafter.

Thus when they talk of our spiritual impotency, and inability to do any good thing (for after all the noise they make about our coming to Christ, they mean being carryed thither with an Omnipotent and irresistible power) they prove it wonderfully from *our being dead in trespasses and sins*, and therefore as a dead man can contribute nothing to his own Resurrection, so more can we towards our Conversion: which is true of natural Death, but will be hard to prove of a moral Death, which consists in the prevalency of vicious habits contracted by long custom (which was the case of the Heathens, whom the Apostle there speaks of) which do so enslave the will, that it is very difficult, though not impossible, for such persons to return to the

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the love and practice of vertue: another argument of the like nature is, that we are said to be *created to good works*, and to *become new Creatures*, and therefore can contribute no more to it, than we did to our first Creation: and that we are *born again*, which signifies, that we are wholly passive in it: which were true indeed, if our *being created to good works* did signifie the manner and method of our Conversion, and not the nature of the new Creature, which is the true meaning of it; that as in the first Creation we were created after the image of God, so we are renewed after his image in the second; which is therefore expressly called in other places the renewing and renovation of our minds.

When this way fails, they take another course with metaphors, and similitudes to make them serve their purpose, and that is, by considering all the properties and qualifications of those things Christ is compared to, and applying all, that will serve their turn to Christ, without any regard to the end, for which they are used.

Thus the *Kingdom of Heaven*, tha

the Gospel, is compared to a pearl of great price. *Mathew 13. 46.* This parable in some mens Divinity signifies Christ, and the excellency of Christ appears plainly in this comparison. For *For Pearls add no real worth to them, but wear them, but Christ this Illustration Pearl doth, he makes us worthy with his worthiness.* Excellently turned to serve their purpose; though all that the admirable means is, that we should be ready to part with all for the belief and profession of the Gospel, as other men are, to sell all they have to purchase a pearl of great value.

*Watsons
Christ's
Loveliness:*

Thus Christ was prefigured by Mannah, and this Mannah was of a circular figure; and this Circle was a figure of Christs perfection; this was meat cooked and drest in Heaven, God himself prepared it, and then served it in, thus Jesus Christ was prepared and set apart of his Father to the blessed work of Mediatorship. And Mannah suited it self to every mans Palate, thus Jesus Christ suits himself to every Christians condition; he is full of quickning, strengthening, comforting vertue. That is, he is what every man fancies him to be, relishes according to the gusto of their own palates:

*Idem.
Christ's
Loveliness.*

what

what precious discoveries are here of Christ! and what irrefragable proofs for them! Thus to proceed, Christ was resembled to a Rock, 1 Cor. 10. 3

Watson.
ibidem.

That Rock was Christ. And then he is a Rock for defence, and a Rock for offence, and a Rock for Comfort to screen us from the wrath of God, and to contain the honey of the promises. Christ is resembled by the brazen Serpent: now

Watson's
true brazen
Serpent.

brass being an inferiour metal signifies the meanness of his humanity, and it being a firm solid metal, it signifies the power of his Godhead, and though it shines, it doth not dazle the eyes, and so signifies the glory of the Godhead veiled with the Manhood: thus the brazen Serpent was made like a Serpent, but was no real Serpent, so Christ was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, but was no sinner. The Serpent was list up, so Christ was list up in the acclamations of Angels, in the preaching of the Gospel and upon the Cross, which the Pole was a Type of, and in our hearts by contemplating, admiring, loving him. As the serpent was list up to be lookt upon by the stung Israelites, which looking implied a secret hope, they had of Cure, so if we do but look on Christ fiducially,

shall be cured of our sins. Never as there so happy a man in expounding Types; never was any brazen serpent half so subtil.

Thus as the same Author tells us, Christ is compared to a Vine, and that upon several accounts. The Vine of itself is weak, and must be supported and born up, so the Humane Nature of Christ which it seems is represented by the (Vine) was of it self weak, and was to be supported, and underpropt by the Divine Nature. The Vine grows in the Garden, not in the Forest, thus Christ grows in the Garden of the Church, he is not known among the Heathen: but I should have thought it more grand to have said, that Christ this Spiritual Vine doth not find, but make a Garden, where ever he grows, since the Church owes its Being to him, not he to the Church; thus the Vine communicates to the branches, and Christ shoots up his sap of grace into Believers, who are the branches of this Vine: And the Vine hath rare, delicious, fruit growing on it, and thus the promises are the Clusters of Grapes growing upon Christ the true Vine. And whereas other Vines bear but one sort of fruit, this Spiritual

Watson's
Spiritual
Vine.

Vine bears many, the fruit of justification, the fruit of sanctification, and the fruit of consolation. And the blood of Christ is the Wine of this Spiritual Vine, which cheers the heart of man, as other Wine doth, as he excellently proves from an old Latin Catch, Curam metumq; juvat dulci lydo solvere, that is let us drink away care, &c. and now what fine work might a prophane wit make with Scripture at this rate of expounding metaphors.

But still they have a fetch beyond all this, which consists in jumbling metaphors, and Allegories, and Types, and Figures, altogether, and proving one thing from another in a most wonderful manner.

As suppose a man would prove, that Christ is infinitely beautiful and lovely, this is a most easie thing to do, if you take the right method: for first, *he is*

*Watsons
Christ's
Loveliness.*

Lovely in his Titles, he is the desire of all Nations, the Prince of Peace, the holy one of Israel, Elect and precious, these are most lovely Titles, which argue him to be very beautiful.

And then he is lovely in his Types too: *he was typified by Persons most lovely: by Moses, and David, and Solomon,*

mon, who were all lovely for one thing or other, either upon account of Natural beauty, or education, or office, or those great things done by them. But then he was typified by lovely things; As by the *Pillar of Cloud and Fire, which was most lovely to behold; by the Mannah, which was very lovely too, because it was of a circular figure, and extraordinary meat, and suited to every ones Palate; and by the mercy seat, and brazen Serpent, and Noahs Ark.* Who can forbear being smitten with so lovely a Person? *Lovely as a Pillar of Cloud and fire, lovely as Noahs Ark, lovely as any Serpent, yea as a brazen Serpent?* But besides all these, *Christ is resembled to a Rose, the Rose of Sharon, the Queen of flowers, and how lovely is this Rose. To a Vine, the noblest of Plants, and oh what lovely Clusters grow upon this Vine! To a Corner stone, and oh how lovely and precious is this Stone! to a Rock, and a River in a dry ground, and a rich treasure, and a beautiful Robe, and all these are lovely, (and so should any thing have been, that had come in his way at that time)* and who can doubt after all this, *but that Christ is the chiefest of ten thousand,*

sands, yea that he is altogether lovely.

Thus if I had a mind to imitate these men, and prove that Christ is very powerful, as well as lovely, most of the same types and resemblances, would serve the turn. For he was prefigured by *Moses*, who did wonders in *Ægypt*; He was typified by *David*; who killed *Goliath*; by *Solomon*; who was the most powerful Prince in his days; by the Pillar of Cloud and Fire, out of which God thundred upon the Host of *Pharoah*; By the brazen Serpent, which had power to Cure the stung *Israelites*; by *Noahs* Ark, which was certainly very strong, that it could resist all the force and power of the general deluge; He is resembled to a Corner stone, which supports the whole building, to a Rock which is for offence, and defence, to a rich treasure, and riches all men know, are the Nerves and Sinews of Power, and he is most beautiful, and beauty is stronger than all the rest, and Conquers more than Sword or Fire.

Thus Christ is very rich; for he is rich in Wisdom, and rich in beauty, and rich in strength, and power, rich in his Godhead, and rich in his Manhood;

ood; and then do but add Husband
o all this, and he is a rich and a pow-
erful, and a beautiful Husband: thus
Christ is Lovely, because he is rich and
powerful, and he is powerful, because
he is rich and lovely, and Rich, be-
cause he is powerful and lovely: and
now is it possible these men should
want proofs for any thing. And is there
any need now to prove, that all this is
the work of fancy and imagination,
that it is nothing but phrase, and Re-
ligious tattle, the fruit of precarious
Hypotheses, and of a pretended ac-
quaintance with Christs Person; for at
this Rate it were easie to make any
thing of any thing, to find out some
pretty words, and phrases, and allusi-
ons, types, or Metaphors, to counte-
nance all the feats of Enthusiasm, and
the more godly Romances of Popish
Legends. He who would be an hon-
est Reader of Books, who hath no
mind to turn every thing into Bur-
lesque, ought carefully to distinguish
between proper, and allusive, or me-
taphorical expressions, to consider the
use of words and phrases, and the
great variety of Dialects, and the pe-
culiar Moods of speaking in every lan-

guage, and in every age, and to urge Metaphors no further than their first intention, without which we may deal by all Authors, as these men deal by the Scripture, make them speak non-sence, or (as they use to call them) venerable Mysteries, and overthrow and contradict their own design: And this is their first way of expounding, otherwise called adulterating and debauching Scripture, by the sound of words.

Secondly, When this will not do, then they argue and reason about the sense of Scripture from their own preconceived notions and opinions of Religion, pretend to prove their own Scheme and fancies of Religion from the Scripture, but in truth prove the sense of the Scripture by its agreement with their own opinions; which is such a trick, as the Papists have got, to prove the Authority of the Church from the Scripture, and the Scripture from the Church. I might give Instances of this in abundance, but I shall mention only some few, lest I tire my self, and my Reader.

Thus after all their talk of being justified by the imputation of Christs Righteousness, there are a great many places

places of Scripture, which expressly tell us, *that we are justified by Faith, have Remission of sins by Faith, have peace with God by Faith, are sanctified by Faith, are the Sons of God by Faith, have Eternal Life, and are saved by Faith*: now how do you think shall all these Scriptures be reconciled to their notion of being justified by the imputation of Christs Righteousness: for Faith certainly is not the Righteousness of Christ in their notion of it: why this is plain at first sight to these acquaintances of Christ. For when Faith is said to justify, and save, &c. we must not understand this absolutely, that is, we must not understand this of Faith, considered as Faith, but we must understand it relatively, that Faith justifies, as it brings us to Christ, and makes us one with him, by whom we are justified: Faith apprehends the Righteousness of Christ, and the Righteousness of Christ justifies: now this distinction is plainly owing to their preconceived opinions, without which no man could ever have stumbled on't: that when the Scripture saith, that Faith justifies, the meaning should be, that it justifies and saves instrumentally and relatively (words

which the Scriptures are unacquainted with) that is, not as it is Faith, but as it apprehends the Righteousness of Christ; which in plain words signifies, that Faith does not justify; though the Scripture so often says it does.

But now the Reason of this Interpretation is very plain; for should Faith justify, as our own Act, (that is, as Faith) it would be as bad as good works, and as perfectly irreconcilable with the free Grace of God: *For had justification been promised to any thing wrought in us, or done by us, it had been of desert, not of Grace, of wages, not of mercy: if God had promised justification upon any work of ours, had said, we must bring so much humiliation, so much repentance, so much breaking of spirit, so much Grace, so many Prayers, Alms-deeds, (or so much Faith, as our own Act) and then we should be justified, it would not have been of Grace, not of free mercy: though modest men, who are not so apt to dream of meriting by every thing they do, would have thought, that free Grace and Faith might have been easily reconciled, though Faith had justified, as our own Act, since the reward and recom-*

pence

ence does so infinitely exceed the work that there can be no suspicion of merit, and where there is no merit, the Reward is of Grace, and not of debt, whatever the condition of the promise be.

But this is past all doubt, when it is confirmed by a metaphor or two, of which there is great variety, some more apt than others: as for Instance:

The vertue is not in Faith but in Christ,

as appears in this, *a Ring, which hath a precious stone in it, which will staunch blood, we say the Ring stauncheth blood.*

But the vertue doth not barely lye in the Ring, but in the stone in the Ring: so

Faith is the Ring, Christ the precious stone, all that Faith does, is to bring

some Christs merits to the Soul, and so it justifies: so that if you can but find

out an improper and absurd form of speech in use among the vulgar, or if

you can but invent one, as this Gentleman does, for I never met with this

before; it is a sufficient reason to expound Scripture, as improperly as un-

earned men talk, or think; or if you can but fancy Faith a Ring, and Christ

a precious Stone, it is enough to answer all those places of Scripture, which

peak of that legal and meritorious way
of

Watson's
Mystery of
the Lords
Supper, p.
64.

ms. B. 1. 1.

of justification by Faith : And thus Faith justifies, as it is a receptive Grace: it is the receiving the Gold; that enriches, so Faith receiving of Christs merits, and filling the Soul with all the fulness of God, must needs be an en-

Idem.p.65. riching Grace : *In the body there are Veins, that suck the nourishment that comes into the Stomach, and turns it into blood and Spirits ; Faith is such a sucking Vein , that draws vertue from Christ, and therefore is called a precious Faith :* Is not this very plain now to him who understands the nature of our Union to Christ, which is like that of the Members of a natural body, and that we are saved by Christ, just as the body is nourished by the Stomach.

And now to make all clear, we may give a Philosophical account, why God chose Faith to be the Instrument of our Justification ; *because it is a humble Grace, and gives the glory of all to free Grace. If repentance should fetch justification from Christ , a man would be ready to say , this was for my tears (strange deserving Creatures these, who can dream of meriting Heaven with a few tears) but Faith is humble, it is an empty hand, and what merit can*
there

ere be in that? doth a poor mans
 rching out his hand, merit an Alms?
 es just as much as a few tears merit
 eaven) Faith is only a golden Bucket,
 it draws Water out of the well of life;
 t why may not those, who are so
 t to be conceited of merit, grow as
 oud, that they have a golden Bucket,
 if the whole Well were their own.
 Thus you see, how these men deal
 th the Scripture, and *poor humble*
ith, make what they please of them,
 fit them to their purpose; that Faith
 ometimes feet to go to Christ, some-
 nes a hand to receive him, a mouth to
 ed on him, an eye to look fiducially
 him, a Ring to hold this precious
 one, a Vein to suck justification out
 the Spiritual Stomach (which by
 e way is a very new conceit, for
 ough Christ is called the head, I ne-
 r before read, that he was the Sto-
 ach) a Bucket to draw water out of
 is Well, *Christ*, though in this they
 e very civil to Faith, in making it a
 olden Bucket; whereas at other
 nes they tell us, that Faith may be
 ore and blear-eyed *Leah*, a shaking
 d Palsie hand, weak and bending
 egs, and have all the infirmities that
 may

may be, and be never the worse neither as to the purpose of justification; so that Faith had need be a very humble Grace, else it would take such language very ill from them.

Thus to give you but one instance more; when these men are prest with those Scriptures, that urge the necessity of good works, and a holy life: *that without holiness no man shall see God; that the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all unrighteousness, and ungodliness of men.* That our acceptance with God depends upon a holy and vertuous life: *that God is no respector of Persons, but in every Nation, he that seareth God, and worketh Righteousness is accepted with him. That except our Righteousness exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees (those Immoral Hypocrites who plac't all their Righteousness in observing the Ceremonies of the Law without the purity of their hearts and lives) we shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. That he who breaks one of the least of these Commandments, and teacheth men so; shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven (that is shall have no Inheritance there) and he that*
doth.

th, and teacheth them, shall be called
at in the Kingdom of Heaven, that is
ll be greatly rewarded, with many
ore of the like nature, which assert
e absolute necessity of a holy life,
d keeping the Commandments of
od, to entitle us to his love and fa-
our, and the rewards of the next
e; which perfectly overthrow their
adamental notion of justification by
e righteousness of Christ; the me-
s of whose death they say free us
om the guilt of sin, and that punish-
ent, which is due to it, make us as
rfectly Innocent, as if we had never
fended, and the righteousness of
s life imputed to us, makes us righ-
ous, so as to deserve a reward: gives
an actual title to glory: Now any
ne, who is not mightily acquainted
ith the Person of Christ, would
ink it a very hard talk to reconcile
is Doctrine of Justification by the
mputation of Christs Righteousness
ithout any thing of our own, with
ie necessity of a holy life, which the
cripture doth so expressly assert. But
ese men defie you, if you charge
em with destroying the necessity of
holy life: And I wish with all my
heart,

heart, that whatever the consequence of their Doctrines is, it may have no bad influence upon their lives.

Dr. Owen's
Communion
with Christ,
Ch. 8.

For they tell us, *that this Universal Obedience and good works* (a very suspicious word, which methinks these men should be afraid to name) *are indispensably necessary from the sovereign appointment and will of God, this is the will of God, even our Sanctification; It is the will of the Father, and it is the will of the Son, I have ordained you, that you bring forth fruit. John 15. 16. and the appointment of the Holy Ghost. And then Holiness is one eminent and special end of the peculiar dispensation of Father, Son, and Spirit, in the business of exalting the glory of God in our salvation; It is the end of the Fathers electing love, he hath chosen us, that we should be holy, Eph. 1. 4. the end of the sons redeeming love, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purifie to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. Titus 2. 14. and of the Spirits sanctifying love, as any one would easily guess.*

It is necessary to the glory of God, to the glory of the Father, to the glory of the Son, and to the glory of the Holy Ghost,

host, whose Temple we are: and are
 not these men now mightily injured
 being charged with denying the ne-
 cessity of a Holy Life, who make it
 necessary upon so many accounts? Is
 not great pity, they should be so
 abused? But the truth is, all this is not
 one syllable to the purpose; for the
 question was about its necessity to Sal-
 vation, and if we be justified and sa-
 ved without it, all this cannot prove
 any necessary obligation on us to the
 practice of it: God hath appointed
 and commanded obedience, but where
 the sanction of this Law, will he
 damn those, who do not obey, for their
 disobedience, and will he save and
 reward those who do obey for their
 obedience, not a word of this; for
 it destroys our justification by the
 righteousness of Christ *only*: And if
 after all these commands, God hath left
 indifferent, whether we obey or
 not, I hope such commands cannot
 make obedience necessary.

The Father hath elected us to be
 holy, and the Son redeemed us to be
 holy: but will the Father elect and
 the Son redeem none but those who
 are holy, and reject and reprobate all
 others;

others? doth this Election and Redemption suppose Holiness in us, or is it without any regard to it? For if we be elected and redeemed without any regard to our own being holy, our Election and Redemption is secure, whether we be holy or not, and so this cannot make holiness necessary on our parts, though it may be necessary on Gods part to make us holy, but that is not our care.

Obedience and a holy life is for the glory of the Father, the Son, and holy Spirit: how so? when the necessity of Holiness is so destructive to free Grace, which is the only glory God designs to advance by Christ. If this will not do yet *Holiness is necessary to our honour, for it makes us like to God.* Prophane men that they are! as if the perfect Righteousness of Christ, his beautiful Robes, were no much more for our honour, and did not make us more like to God than the rags and patches of our own Righteousness: however if men prefer their lusts and interests before their honour, the necessity of holiness ceases.

But it is for Peace. What Peace,
pra

ay you? Peace of Conscience? Why
 en must we at last fetch our Peace
 and security from our own duties and
 graces? Is not this to renounce Christ?

*Miserable men that we are! must we then
 t about correcting our lives, amending
 ur ways, performing duties required,
 and so follow after righteousness accord-
 ing to the Prescript of the law? Why this
 the course, wherein many men continue
 ng with much perplexity, sometimes
 ping, oftner fearing, sometimes ready
 give quite over, sometimes vowing to
 continue (their Consciences being no
 ways satisfied, nor righteousness in any
 measure obtained) all their days; After
 they have tired themselves perhaps in the
 urgency of their ways, they come at
 length with fear and trembling and dis-
 appointment to the conclusion of the Apo-
 cle, by the works of the Law no man is
 justified, and with David cry, that if
 God marks what is done amiss, there is
 no standing before him. And is this
 the way, in which we must seek for
 Peace? is this the way to enjoy Commu-
 ion with God by our own righteous-
 ess? why doth not all our Wisdom of
 walking with God consist in our Acquain-
 ance with Christ? God is light and in*

*J. O. Ex-
 cellency of
 Jesus
 Christ.
 Digr. 2. p.
 113.*

*Ibidem p.
 119.*

him is no darkness at all, we are darkness, and in us no light at all. He is life, a living God, we are dead, dead Sinners, dead in trespasses and sins. He is holiness, and glorious in it, we wholly defiled, an abominable thing. He is love, we full of hatred, hating and being hated. Surely this is no foundation of agreement, or upon that of walking (that is of Communion) together: nothing can be more remote than this frame from such a condition. The foundation then of this peace (that is of agreement and Communion with God) is laid in Christ, hid in Christ, he, saith the Apostle, is our peace, he hath made peace for us; he is the new and living way into the holy of holies. I am the way (saith Christ) and no man cometh to the Father, but by me; he is the Medium of all Communication between God and us, in him we meet, in him we walk. So that if this Gentlemans memory had not failed him, he would never have told us in the 8. Chap. that holiness is necessary to our Peace and Communion with God: when a little before he had disclaimed this, as wholly useles to that purpose.

But however holiness is very useful
to

all the purposes of life: that it may be necessary to Salvation: it serves for the Conviction of the Enemies of God. How so? When it is not essentially necessary to his Friends; and it is for the Conversion of others. Why so? When men may be converted without it: It keeps the judgments of God from other men, as Ten good men could have preserved Sodom. But why cannot the righteousness of Christ do this more effectually, than the holiness of men? But, It is necessary in respect of the state and condition of justified persons: for they are accepted, and received into Friendship with an holy God, God of purer eyes, than to behold iniquity, &c. and therefore they must cleanse and purifie themselves. What need of this? When they are Cloathed with the Robes of Christs Righteousness which is the only foundation of our Communion with God, as you heard before.

But however holiness is necessary with respect to sanctification. We have us a new Creature, 2 Cor. 5. 17. this new Creature is fed, cherishd, nourisht, kept alive, by the fruits of holiness; to what end hath God given us new hearts,

and new Natures? is it, that we should kill them, stifle the Creature, that is found in us, in the Womb? that we should give him to the old man to be devoured? The phrase of this is admirable, and the reasoning unanswerable for if men be new Creatures, they will certainly live new lives, and this makes holiness absolutely necessary by the same Reason, that every thing necessarily is, what it is, when it is; but still we enquire after a necessary obligation to the practice of holiness, and that we cannot discover yet.

Well! *But Holiness is necessary as the means to the end.* This indeed is something to the purpose, but let us hear how: *Though it be neither the cause matter, nor condition of our justification (mark the Hypothesis) yet it is the way appointed of God for us to walk in for the obtaining Salvation, and therefore he that hath hope of Eternal Life purifies himself, as he is pure, and none shall ever come to the end, who walk not in the way, for without holiness is impossible to see God.* This I confess is all pertinent, and home to the purpose, but yet there are two little faults in it; that it contradicts it self, and

and overthrows their darling opinions, which I can very well pardon, if he saith: What? the necessary way to Eternal Life, and yet neither the cause, matter, nor condition: at least you might allow the way to Eternal life to be the *causa sine qua non*, without which we shall never get thither; and that in spite of all your distinctions will entitle it to the nature of a condition. But not to dispute about words, I am content it should only be the necessary way to Eternal Life: but what becomes of Christ then? who is the *only* way, the truth and the life: is not the righteousness of Christ able to save us without an additional righteousness of our own? doth the Active and Passive Righteousness of Christ both free us from guilt and punishment, and give us an actual right and title to glory? and yet can we not be saved without walking in the ways of holiness? what becomes of free Grace then? is not this to *eke out the righteousness of Christ with our own? to make Christ our justifier, and our works our justification?*

Thus you see, how men wrest and pervert the Scripture to make it speak

their sense, and justifie their darling opinions and fancies, though not always with the same success; for some truths are so plain and stubborn, that they will not bend, but must be broke into the most palpable absurdities and contradictions, before they can be fitted to their opinions, and then they agree like new Cloath in an old Garment, which makes the rent the wider.

It were easie to produce many more instances of this nature, but this is enough to show you how dangerous it is to pre-possess our fancies with some arbitrary notions in Religion, which naturally force men to pervert the Scriptures to make them speak the Orthodox language. To this we owe all those nice and subtle distinctions, which constitute the body of Systematical Divinity, which commonly have no other design, than to evade the force of Scripture, or to bribe it to speak on their side. The Authority of Scripture is sacred and inviolable, and it is dangerous to call that into question, whatever acquaintance men have with the Person of Christ; but as *Mr. Chillingworth* observes of the Church of
Rome,

ome, that to establish her Tyranny over
mens Consciences, she need not either
abolish or corrupt the holy Scripture
which in regard of the numerous mul-
titude of Copies dispersed through all pla-
ces, translated into almost all languages,
warded with all solicitous care and in-
dustry, had been an impossible attempt)
but the more expedite way, and therefore
the more likely to be successful, was to
win the opinion and esteem of the pub-
lick and authorized Interpreter of them,
and the Authority of adding to them,
what Doctrines she pleased under the title
of traditions or definitions. Thus though
their fancies and the Scripture agree
no better, than the Church of Rome
and the Scripture do, yet they may be
both retained, so their opinions may
not expound the Scriptures, and add
such limitations, distinctions, glosses,
&c. as are necessary to make them
Orthodox.

The sum of all is, that to know
Christ is not to be thus acquainted
with his Person, but to understand his
Gospel in its full latitude and extent ;
it is not the Person, but the Gospel
of Christ, which is the way, the truth,
and the life, which directs us in the true

way to life and happiness. Which instructs us in our duty, and furnishes us with all the motives and arguments to a good life, and gives us the greatest assurance of our reward. This Acquaintance with Christs Person, which these men pretend to, is only a work of fancy, and teaches men the Arts of Hypocrisie, it undermines the fundamental design of the Gospel, makes men incurably ignorant, and yet conceited of their own knowledge, impertinent and endless talkers, and insolent Censurers of all Mankind: every Boy, who is acquainted with these notions, learns to despise the ignorance of his teachers, as if they knew nothing of Christ, and of the Mystery of the Gospel; and now the Laws of Christ will not down with them, this is moral and legal Preaching; nothing appears wholesom and savoury to their palates, but some Romantick descriptions of the beauty, loveliness, fulness, and preciousness of Christ. But I hope hereafter they will see reason to believe, that we are not such Strangers to Christ, as they imagine, but have a greater Reverence for him, than to be so rude and unmannerly,
than

an to make so bold with his Person,
and with his Laws; and are too ho-
rrest to abuse the people with such
dreams and fruitless speculations.

The wildness and distraction of these
men makes me so much the more ad-
mire the Wisdom and the Honesty of
our Church, who in her publick Ca-
tchism hath been careful to prevent
these cheats and delusions of fancy:
feeds her Children with wholesom and
substantial food, hath taught them a
religion without Art or Subtilty, hath
instructed them in the nature of their
baptismal Vow, and those obligations
lays on them to a vertuous life: hath
taught them the Apostles Creed, which
contains those great and essential Ar-
cles of Religion, which are the ne-
cessary Principles of Action, hath given
them a plain and easie explication of the
ten Commandments, which are the
rules of a good life, hath taught them
to pray to God, and what the true de-
sign of our Saviours Institutions is,
without filling their heads with no-
tions and Artificial Theories of Reli-
gion, which serve only to make them
piddy with a vain conceit of know-
ledge, to talk ill, and to live worse.

And

And now it is time to dismiss these acquaintances of Christ, and if nothing will make them wiser, to leave them to their own dreams and dotage; only advising them, that however they may indulge themselves in these choice speculations, they would have a care of pretending any acquaintance with Christs Person for the neglect or contempt of his Laws, lest they fare as ill, as another of his acquaintance did, *Luke 19. 21.* who argued from the severity of his temper and disposition to apologize for his own sloath and idleness: *for I feared Thee, because thou art an austere man, who takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that, thou didst not sow.* But it seems, as great an acquaintance as he was, he drew a very false conclusion, when he hid his Talent in a Napkin, as his Lord convict him to his cost: and it will be the same case, though we argue from other Principles, not from the severity, but from the fondness and Indulgence of our Saviour, from the merits of his Death, or the Imputation of his Righteousness: The safest way is to do what he bids us, lest he be too hard for us at Reasoning, and making *Hypothesis.*

But

But yet there is one thing more, which I must take notice of: that as when the Scripture speaks of the knowledge of Christ, it includes not only the speculative part of knowledge, which consists in true notions, and opinions, but the vertue and efficacy of his knowledge in the government of lives, in transforming us into the likeness of our Lord and Saviour, and making us obedient to his Laws; without which all our knowledge is but like a curious piece of painting, an accurate Image and Picture, without life or sense: so these men talk also of an experimental knowledge of Christ; the meaning of which is, that his acquaintance with the Person of Christ warms and heats their fancies, and moves their passions; sometimes they find great breakings of heart, they melt and dissolve into tears for their sins, when they remember, what their Lord suffer'd for them, they see him hang upon the Cross, and have all his agonies, and dying groans in their ears; and then they Curse their sins that nailed him there, and tremble at the thoughts of the *Naturalness of Gods vindictive justice to him*: and feel all the

the

The Conclusion of this Chapter.

the horrors and agonies of damned Spirits : at other times they are mightily raviſht with his love, and charm'd and captivated with his beauty : fancy they have him in their arms in the cloſeſt embraces ; *they hear Chriſt call them by name, and ſay to them, as he did to that Woman in the Goſpel, thy ſins are forgiven thee.* They are refreſht and raviſht with his Comforts, and the ſweet Careſſes of his love : they ſee Chriſt adorning them with the beautiful Robes of his Righteouſneſs, owning them for his deareſt Spouſe, and expreſſing all Conjugal affections to them ; now they taſt and reliſh the ſweetneſs of Chriſt, which other men only talk of, and have an experimental ſenſe of his fulneſs to ſupply their wants, of his Love in chearing their Souls, of his beauty in adorning them, they are all life and ſpirit, which is a plain argument, that now Chriſt hath taken up his abode with them.

This will fall under conſideration in what follows ; at preſent I ſhall only ſay this ; that all this may be no more, than the working of a warm and Enthuſiaſtick fancy, and no man ought to think himſelf ever the more experi-
mentally

mentally acquainted with Christ, unless he find the power of it in governing his life: It is very desirable to have always such a quick and vigorous sense of the love of our dying Lord, as may constrain us to live to him, who dyed for us; but without this we are still ignorant of him, however we may be transported with these frantick raptures and extasies of love and joy.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Of our Union to Christ, and Communion with him.

SECT. I.

NExt to the knowledge of Christ there is not a greater Mystery, than *our Union to him, and Communion with him*; on which, as these men represent it, are built all those wild and fanciful conclusions, which so directly oppose both the Doctrines and practice of Christianity. And therefore it is of great concernment to state this matter, and to examine, what is meant in Scripture by our Union to Christ, and Communion with him; for the Scripture does mention such a relation between Christ and Christians, as may be express'd by an Union, and those phrases of *being in Christ, and abiding in him*, can signifie no less.

- I. And first, I observe, that those metaphors, which describe the Relation and Union betwixt Christ and Christians, do primarily refer to the Christian Church,
- Church,

Church, not to every individual Christian. Thus Christ is called a Head, but he is the head of his Church, which is his body, as a Husband is the head of the Wife, *Eph. 5. 23, 24.* No particular Christian is the body of Christ, but only a member in this body. Christ is called a Husband, but then the whole Church or Society of Christians, not every particular Christian, is his Spouse, as *St. Paul* tells the Church of *Corinth*, *2 Cor. II. 2. For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste Virgin to Christ.* Christ is a Shepherd, and the Christian Church is his Flock, *John 10.* For the relation between Shepherd and Sheep doth primarily concern the whole Flock: Christ is the Rock, upon which his Church is built, the chief Corner Stone, and the Christian Church a Holy Temple: so that all these Metaphors in their first and most proper use refer to the whole Society of Christians, and are designed to represent the Union between Christ and his Church.

Secondly, I observe further, that the Union of particular Christians to Christ