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EVANGELICAL DISCOURSES

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A N E S S A Y

ON THE

Powers and Contests of FLESH and SPIRIT.

BY *ISAAC WATTS*, D. D.

L O N D O N :

Printed for C. DILLY in the Poultry.

M, DCC, XCI.

THE
DEDICATION.

TO THE
CHURCH OF CHRIST
ASSEMBLING IN
BERRY-STREET, LONDON.

Dear Christian Friends, beloved in our Lord,

HAVING dedicated to you my
first volume of Sermons, printed
twenty-six years ago, I thought it
proper to address *this* to you, being
the last I am ever like to publish,
that I might testify to the *world*
the continuance of my sincere af-
fection for you; and signify to *you*,

my ardent desire to do what I can, in my present weak state of health, to promote the welfare of your souls.

THE *Essay on the Powers and Contests of Flesh and Spirit*, which is added at the end of these Discourses, has been written many years ago, and I hope it may be made useful, under the blessing of God, to lead private Christians to form a right judgment, in many things relating to their spiritual concerns.

As I trust all these papers contain the truths of God, which I
have

have thus recommended to you, so I am persuaded you will find them to be exactly conformable to the New Testament, in all your reviews and studies of that blessed book. It is there my hopes of eternal life are fixed; and in this hope, I trust all of you will be found walking stedfastly in the same faith, by the same rule, till you are at length made happy partakers of the same salvation.

THE great harmony which has subsisted betwixt me and my dear and worthy brother and colleague, the reverend Mr. Samuel Price, for more than forty-three years, with-

out any interruption, has been very comfortable to us, and a considerable blessing to you. May the Spirit of God render his continued labours amongst you, in the gospel, very serviceable, for your further establishment and growth in grace! With this design, I commit these Discourses to the providence of Christ, and commit *him* and *you* also into his hands, to whom, I doubt not, you have often surrendered yourselves.

AND let me intreat you, as a church of Christ, not only to *suffer*, but to *regard* the word of exhortation, which, as your *aged pastor*,
whose

whose voice you may probably hear no more, I would now, in a solemn manner, leave with you: (*viz.*)

C O N T I N U E to be of one mind, live in peace, be careful to practise all the duties of holiness and righteousness, keep close to God, by humble fervent prayer and dependance, seek his face for direction, and a blessing in all your affairs.

To the God of almighty power, and infinite wisdom and grace, I commend you; who is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

A 4 FINALLY,

FINALLY, my beloved friends, farewell. May the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be ever with you. *Amen.*

I AM, with much respect, under very declining circumstances of life,

Your affectionate friend,

and faithful servant,

in the gospel,

STOKE-NEWINGTON, }

Jan. 13th, 1746-7. }

ISAAC WATTS.



T H E

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Examined and Established.

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FLESH and SPIRIT.

DISCOURSE I.

The DIVINE COMMISSION of St. PAUL
Examined and Established:

I N A

SERMON preached on Easter-day, 1731.

In opposition to all the Deists who have appeared in the world since Christianity began: Being a full confirmation of the blessed gospel.

The First Part of this SERMON.

Acts xxv. 18, 19.

Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

THE history which introduces these verses may be represented in short in this manner:

The Jews were highly enraged against St. Paul for preaching the gospel of Christ
with

with such freedom and boldness in several places; and when they found him at Jerusalem, they took occasion to seize him, and bring him before the magistrate, with heavy accusations; but when he had defended himself so well, the magistrates saw no cause to punish him. The Jews lay in wait to assassinate him, or murder him privately; which being known, he was sent by night to Cæsarea, to be judged by Felix the governor; and there he lay in prison two years, till a new governor, Festus, came into the province.

The Jews still pursued their malice against Paul, and what they could not obtain of Felix, they hoped to persuade Festus to grant them: And when Festus had heard what charges the Jews brought against him, and when Paul appealed unto Cæsar, fearing that Festus would comply with the unjust desire of the Jews, Festus had a mind to hear the whole cause, that he might send Cæsar a more particular account. Now king Agrippa being there upon a visit, Festus tells Agrippa the story in this speech of which my text is a part. Ver. 17, &c.

And from these words we may take occasion to make these three observations:

- I. *Civil governors among the Heathens, before they were taught to persecute the Christians, thought it strange to have matters*

matters of pure religion brought before them, where the state and the peace of it was not concerned.

II. *The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the grand question in our debates about Christianity, and which we are solicitous to maintain, in vindication of our religion.*

III. *Paul would not have affirmed Jesus Christ, a dead man, to be alive, without very good proof of it; knowing that the whole religion which he taught the world depended on the truth of it.*

First observation. *Civil governors among the Heathens usually, in ancient times, thought it strange to have matters of pure religion brought before them.*

Festus imagined some dreadful accusation of sedition or murder was brought against Paul, or some high crime against the state, when he was with such fury brought before him; but there was nothing of this kind appeared. St. Paul expressly says, *He had walked uprightly before God and man, and exercised himself to keep a good conscience toward God and men; a conscience void of offence; and after many years, he came to bring alms to his own nation, to do his country a kindness, and the Jews seized him, upon pretence of his opinions being contrary to the religion of their nation.*

The great design of civil government, and the institution of magistracy among men, is to keep the peace, to secure the persons and properties of mankind who are innocent, from all manner of injury; and there is nothing more of religion comes within their province, than is absolutely necessary to secure the public peace. Now, upon this account, and that with some appearance of reason, it hath been supposed that Atheists, or those who deny God, or his providence, or his government of the world, may be justly punished by magistrates, so far at least as to be banished from their dominions; because they who deny the knowledge and justice of a God, a superior governor, can give no security by oaths, of their allegiance or loyalty to any government whatsoever; and will break all manner of bonds when they can do it safely. But where some divine power is owned and acknowledged, who knows and will punish perjury and falsehood, the civil governor hath no further power in affairs of pure religion, where the peace of mankind, the property of man, and the safety of the state, are not concerned: Now these privileges and powers are not impaired by any article of the religion of nature.

This was the notion of the wiser and better Heathens by the light of nature, and therefore you do not find them usually quarrelling about their gods, and bringing one another
before

before courts of justice, because of their contentions and differences in matters of their religion: Nor would the magistrates bear it. This appears in the case of St. Paul at Corinth, Acts xviii. 12—16. ‘ And when Gallio was
 ‘ the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insur-
 ‘ rection with one accord against Paul, and
 ‘ brought him to the judgment-seat, saying,
 ‘ this fellow persuadeth men to worship God
 ‘ contrary to the law. And when Paul was
 ‘ now about to open his mouth, Gallio said
 ‘ unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong,
 ‘ or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would
 ‘ that I should bear with you; but if it be a
 ‘ question of words and names, and of your
 ‘ law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge
 ‘ of such matters: And he drove them from
 ‘ the judgment-seat.’

But then Gallio was much to blame in the 17th verse, where he took no cognizance of the Greeks beating Sosthenes, an innocent man, being *the ruler of the synagogue*; which was a crime against the peace of the city, and an offence against the government, which Gallio ought to have resented.

But however the civil magistrates among the Heathens had nothing to do in matters of pure religion, yet the Jews were continually running to the civil magistrate with their charges against those who opposed their religion, or any part of it. And this is the plain and apparent reason of it: The government

of the Jews was a theocracy: God was their king as well as their God; the law that he gave them by the hand of Moses was the law of their secular affairs as well as the rule of their religion; and therefore the high-priest was made a *judge* in many *civil* affairs as well as *religious*. Their religion and their civil government were so interwoven, by God's being their king as well as their God, that there were many crimes in religion to be punished by the civil magistrate, by the appointment of God himself; which makes the case of the Jews different from the case of all other nations under heaven: For no people ever had God for their civil and political governor and lawgiver, but the Jews alone.

Christianity does not claim, or assume, or pretend, to any such privilege or power: It does not alter this matter from what the light of nature hath determined: It introduces no new civil government, but leaves all these matters as it finds them: and since the Judaic state and government are abolished, there is no magistrate on earth hath power to enquire or command, to rule or punish, any further in matters of religion, than to see that the state suffer no damage, and the peace of mankind, and the government be secured.

But this hath been the unhappiness of Christians almost in all ages since Christianity began, they have been cited before magistrates, and punished even by their fellow-
Christians,

Christians, as well as by the Jews and Heathens, for those notions and practices wherein the magistrate hath no power. This the Jews began you see very early, and the Roman governors and Heathens have carried it on; and Christian magistrates have carried this matter to the height, but it is in the Antichristian church. They have done this by bloody persecutions, racks, torments, and murders of the best of their fellow-Christians, where the very light of nature dictated to the best and wisest of Heathens, that they had no power or authority; and it is a plain confession of it, where Festus and Gallio were not willing to meddle; nor would Pilate himself, who crucified Christ, have done it, if the Jews had not almost constrained him; as sufficiently appears in the history of the death of Christ. Let us remember then, that the religion of Christ is not built on the wisdom nor power of man, nor doth it need such a support. All that Christianity wants, is to have the persons, and property, and peace of its professors, secured against the outrages of wicked men. Its own truth and excellency, and divine authority, will make its own way into the world by the assistances of the blessed Spirit, where human powers do but let it alone, and preserve it from the unrighteous violence of its neighbours.

Second observation. *The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the chief article, and the grand point, which private Christians and ministers are solicitous to maintain, in the vindication of their religion.*

This was the point that stood forth to view, and shewed itself with such evidence in the debate between St. Paul and his accusers, when Festus gave them a hearing, that he makes a special remark on that, as though it were the most conspicuous and remarkable article of their contention. Peter and Paul were the two chief preachers among the Christians, who are recorded in scripture, and you find them continually insisting on the resurrection of Christ. It was chiefly the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead that was the matter of Paul's supposed heresy and crime, as Festus understood the matter. This was the great point of contest.

I. *Reason.* Because *this article of the resurrection of Christ is a most effectual proof of his divine commission.* This point, whether *Jesus Christ, who was dead, is now alive, or no,* is a question of such importance, that the Christian religion stands or falls with it. It is certain Jesus Christ was once dead; this the Jews allow, this Festus takes for granted: Jesus was certainly crucified, a spear run into his side, his heart's blood was let out, he was buried, and Pilate the governor, and the priests, sealed up the sepulchre, to guard it
against

against all possible fraud of stealing away the body.

Now if he be not risen again, his religion is not true, his pretences are vain; he was not sent from heaven, nor is he a prophet or messenger of God. St. Paul grants, ‘ If Jesus be
‘ not risen your faith is vain, ye are yet in
‘ your sins; and we who preach a risen Jesus
‘ are false witnesses.’ 1 Cor. xv. 14, 15. But on the other hand, if Jesus be alive, then his religion is divine. Let me just mention these two reasons for what I say.

1. It is an undeniable proof of his divine commission, *Because the prophets foretold this resurrection concerning the Messiah, though in more obscure language, and darker expressions.* Now if he had not risen from the dead, then Jesus had not been the Messiah whom the prophets foretold. See Acts xxvi. 6, 8. for thus St. Paul pleads: ‘ And now I stand and
‘ am judged for the hope of the promise
‘ made of God unto our fathers:—Why
‘ should it be thought a thing incredible with
‘ you, that God should raise the dead?’ 1 Cor. xv. 4. Paul owns that he was dead, and ‘ That he was buried, and that he rose
‘ again according to the scriptures’ Acts xiii. 32, &c. ‘ The promise which was
‘ made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled
‘ the same unto us their children, in that he
‘ hath raised up Jesus from the dead.’ Isa. liii. 9—12. ‘ He poured out his soul unto
‘ death.

‘ death. He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days.’ Pſal. xvi. 10, 11. ‘ Thou wilt not leave my ſoul in hell, nor ſuffer thine holy one to ſee corruption: Thou wilt ſhew me the path of life.’

But on the other hand, if he did riſe from the dead, this is a thing which a mere man could not do by his own power, nor would the holy and all-wiſe, and true and faithful God, ſuffer any evil powers to do it for the vindication of an impoſtor; and therefore he muſt be the true Meſſiah.

2. It is alſo a moſt effectual proof of his commiſſion from God, *Be cauſe Jeſus Chriſt foretold this concerning himſelf*; John ii. 18, 19, 21, 22. *viz.* That he ſhould riſe from the dead, Mat. xvi. 21. The miracles which Chriſt performed were very great, and ſufficient to prove his divine authority: But ſince he gave forth ſuch a prophecy concerning himſelf, if this prophecy had never been fulfilled, it would have weakened the force of his miracles, and given us reaſon to ſuſpect what power they came from. This his riſing from the dead was the great and crowning miracle that gave confirmation to all the reſt.

Now conſidering this reſurrection from the dead, to be foretold by the prophets, and by himſelf in his life-time, this was as great a teſtimony as could be given of God’s approving him as a prophet ſent from heaven: For it is the peculiar property and work of
God

God to raise the dead. See Rom. iv. 17. This is God's eminent prerogative. Surely he must be no common favourite of heaven, on whom the great and almighty God bestows such a privilege. Acts iii. 13, 15. 'Ye have killed the Prince of life, whom God raised up from the dead, whereof we are his witnesses.'

II. *Reason.* Because as his rising from the dead is the great proof of his mission, so the resurrection of Christ is the great foundation of the Christian's hope; which will appear in several particulars; viz.

I. This was a testimony of his having answered the end for which he died, *having made full atonement for sin*, and his being released from the hands of punishing justice. Acts ii. 24. Rom. iv. ult. Rom. viii. 34. He took our sins on him, he did bear the punishment of our iniquities; 'he bare our sins on his own body on the tree, &c.' And 'death is the wages of sin.' Now when he had taken our sins on him, unless he had made full atonement and expiation for sin, he would have lain under the power of death still; but being raised from the dead, it appears, that divine justice hath received full satisfaction for sin; and the way is open for the justice of God to receive sinners into favour.

2. *This is the beginning of his exaltation and his power, to bestow all the blessings of the*

gospel, sanctification, salvation, and eternal life; as well as all the gifts of the Spirit, which confirmed his religion. See ACTS ii. 32, 33, 36. 'This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses: Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear: Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ.' ACTS v. 31. 'Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.'

His government, his intercession, his coming to judgment, all depend on this; and his power to bestow heaven on his disciples, as well as his power to punish the wilful and obstinate, and impenitent, who renounced or rejected his name, his gospel, and his salvation.

3. This Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, is the prime foundation of our most glorious expectations, *It is the pattern and pledge of our final hope and blessedness*: 'Because I live, ye shall live also,' saith our blessed Lord. JOHN xiv. 19. 1 COR. xv. 20, 49. 'Where I am, there shall my servant be. Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept: As
' we

‘ we have born the image of the earthy, ſo
 ‘ ſhall we alſo bear the image of the heavenly.’
 2 Cor. iv. 14. ‘ Knowing that he which
 ‘ raiſed up the Lord Jeſus, ſhall raiſe up us
 ‘ alſo by Jeſus, and ſhall preſent us with
 ‘ you.’ John xii. 26. See more. John xiv.
 3. ‘ I go to prepare a place for you, that
 ‘ where I am, there ye may be alſo.’ Eph.
 ii. 5, 6. ‘ Even when we were dead in ſins,
 ‘ God hath quickened uſtogether with Chriſt,
 ‘ and hath raiſed us up together, and made us
 ‘ fit together in heavenly places in Chriſt
 ‘ Jeſus.’

Occaſional reflection. If you are furniſhed
 with convincing arguments that Jeſus Chriſt
 is riſen from the dead, then you may be af-
 ſured your religion is true; though there may
 be twenty little cavils that you cannot eaſily
 answer: You may be affured alſo, that all the
 bleſſings of this religion are provided and
 ready for his faithful followers.

Is it certain that Jeſus is riſen from the
 dead? Then my ſins are fully atoned for,
 and forgiven, if I truſt in him, and give my-
 ſelf up to him. Rom. viii. 33, 34. ‘ Who
 ‘ ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God’s
 ‘ elect? It is God that juſtifieth: Who is he
 ‘ that condemneſt? It is Chriſt that died,
 ‘ yea rather, that is riſen again, who is even
 ‘ at the right-hand of God, who alſo maketh
 ‘ interceſſion for us;’ *i. e.* as appears from
 the

the foregoing verses, for all those who believe or trust in CHRIST.

Then he hath all power to sanctify and save me, if I commit myself into his hands. Eph. i. latter end, and ii. 1, 5, 8. 'You
' hath he quickened who were dead in tres-
' passes and sins. We are quickened toge-
' ther with Christ, and saved by his grace.'
i. e. We who have trusted in Christ, Eph.
i. 12.

Then I shall *be raised from the dead*, as sure as if it were done already; for he is the pledge and pattern of the resurrection of all his followers. Rom. viii. 11. 'If the Spirit
' of him that raised up Jesus from the dead
' dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from
' the dead shall also quicken your mortal
' bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.'

O happy souls, who have given up themselves sincerely to this all-sufficient Saviour, and can apply these consolations to themselves, which are written in 1 Cor. xv. in many glorious and comfortable expressions.

Third observation. *Paul would not have affirmed Jesus Christ, who was dead, to be alive again, without very good proof of it.*

Here these two things are to be considered, or enquired:

1. *Why Paul would not have affirmed it without just grounds.*

2. *What*

2. *What particular reasons Paul had to believe it; or what good proof he had of it.*

Enquiry the first. Why Paul would not have affirmed it without just grounds: These are some of the considerations to make this evident; *viz.*

1. *He was a man of good natural parts, of great sagacity, as well as good learning, and he could not so easily have been imposed upon in a thing of that importance, which was done in his own country, and the chief city of it, in his own day and time, and when he had abundant opportunities to have searched into the truth or falsehood thereof, and this whole nation was set upon the search and severest scrutiny into it.*

Now that he was a man of parts and knowledge, the good sense and reasoning which appears in his writings, sufficiently testify this character.

He was a young man when he was converted, and he was brought up in Jerusaleme, at the feet of Gamaliel: He must have great opportunities of enquiring concerning the history of the life, doctrine, and death of Christ, and of the report of his resurrection among his own countrymen.

2. *He seems to be a very sincere and faithful honest man:* This his whole conduct shews, if we consider: He appears to have an honest zeal for his religion whilst he was a Pharisee as well as afterward; diligently and

and openly pursuing what he professed: No flaw was found in his morals: No charge of hypocrisy. Acts xxiii. 1. 'I have lived in 'all good conscience unto this day.' Nor are his morals impeached by his worst adversaries.

3 *He was once a fierce and violent enemy to Jesus Christ, and his name, and his gospel, and his followers.* Gal. i. 13. 'I persecuted 'the church of God, and wasted it.' Acts xxvi. 11. 'And being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto 'strange cities.' 1 Tim. i. 13. 'Who was 'before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and 'injurious.' This was sufficiently witnessed by his own countrymen the Jews.

It hath been sometimes said by unbelievers, that testimonies of the resurrection of Christ came only from his friends, and that you have none of the Heathens, or professed Jews, bear witness to it. Here is a professed Jew, and a violent enemy to Christianity, who bears strong and constant witness to it. But it could never be supposed that he should continue an enemy and an unbeliever of Christianity, after he believed that Christ was risen from the dead, and thereby so evidently proved that he was the true Messiah.

4. *He spent his whole life afterwards with much zeal and fatigue, in publishing this truth,* that Jesus Christ was risen from the dead, and the doctrines which depend on it. He
preached

preached this gospel to a multitude of towns and cities among the Heathens, who were utter unbelievers, besides his vindicating this doctrine always among the unbelieving Jews.

5. *He exposed himself to perpetual dangers and difficulties, and to many severe persecutions, by affirming it, and even to death itself; and that without any hope of riches, honours, or pleasures, in this world.* Acts xx. 23, 24. ‘The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me, but none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.’

Now put all these things together, and can it be supposed that any man, a wise, an ingenious, and learned man, faithful and sincere, an enemy to Christianity, and of the name of Christ, should be so effectually convinced of the truth of the doctrine of Christ, and of the facts which support it, as to spend his life in preaching this gospel, and to die for it, if he had not abundant ground to believe it. And if Paul believed it with such evidence, we may venture to believe it too.

DISCOURSE II.

The DIVINE COMMISSION of St. PAUL.
Examined and Established.

The Second Part of this SERMON:

O N

ACTS XXV. 18, 19.

Of one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

SECONDLY: The next thing to be enquired is, *What special and particular reasons Paul had to believe the resurrection of Christ, and thus constantly to preach it?*

Here I shall not run through all the various proofs of the resurrection of Christ, which are often summed up together on this occasion; but only mention those which convinced St. Paul, and gave him this full assurance, that Jesus was risen from the dead.

I. He

1. He saw *Jesus Christ after his resurrection, and spake with him more than once.* Acts ix. 4, 5. 'And a voice said unto him, 'Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he 'said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord 'said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.' And xxii. 17. 'While I prayed in the tem- 'ple, I saw him, saying unto me, Make 'haste, &c.' 1 Cor. xv. 4—8. 'He was 'seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after 'that, of above five hundred brethren at 'once; after that, he was seen of James; 'then of all the apostles; and, last of all, 'he was seen of me also.' He appeals to this sight of Christ, for the truth of the resurrection of Christ.

It belongs to the character of an apostle, that he must be one who had seen the Lord; therefore he partly proves his apostleship that way. 1 Cor. ix. 1. 'Am not I an apostle? 'Have I not seen Jesus Christ, our Lord?'

The first time he saw Christ, after his resurrection, was on the road to Damascus, when there were several with him accompanying him on the road, who were also surprised with the descending glory, though they were not permitted to hear the words. He saw him again, Acts xxii. 17, 18, 21. when Christ sent him to preach to the Gentiles.

2. *He felt a wonderful change in himself, both in his body and his soul, after he had the first*

first vision of Christ: He was struck blind, and after three days had his sight restored, by the laying on of the hands of Ananias, a Christian, according to the vision which was given him. Acts ix. 8, 18. He had a new scene of things set before his understanding, even the whole scheme of Christianity. Some suppose that, in the three days of his blindness, he was taught the gospel. And accordingly it is said, Acts ix. 20, 22. 'That he straightway preached Christ in ' the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.' Gal. i. 1. ' Paul, an apostle, not of man, ' nor by man, but by Jesus Christ.' He had a new heart given him, and was made a new man. ' I received it not of man, ' nor by man, nor was I taught it but by ' the revelation of Jesus Christ. God called ' me by his grace, and revealed his Son in ' me.' Gal. i. 11, 15, 16. *And of an enemy he became a friend, and preacher of the gospel.* Gal. i. 11—16, 23.

3. *He found strange powers communicated to him, and he could speak many unknown languages, and gave this gift of tongues to other men; he could heal the sick with a touch of his hand, or a word of his mouth:* He could make the lame to walk, as at Lystra; Acts xiv. 8, 10. and strike men blind with a reproof; so Elymas, Acts xiii. 11, 12. and could raise the dead; so Eutychus, Acts xx. 10, 12. And besides all this, he had

had a power of communicating these miraculous and healing gifts to Christians; which eminently appears among the Corinthians; to which he appeals in his disputes with them, 1 Cor. xiv. 18.

Now was it possible for a man who felt such amazing changes wrought in him, and such amazing powers communicated to him by Jesus Christ, to doubt whether Christ was risen from the dead, whether Jesus were alive or no? Or would God have communicated such powers to a man, who went about to preach the resurrection of Christ, if Christ had never been raised from the grave? Would God have afforded such favours to a man who preached the Christian religion, if it had not been true, and approved of God?

Nor could St. Paul be deceived in his frequently exercising these powers, nor could he deceive others by pretending to them, nor could he appeal to men who enjoyed them, if he had not received them and bestowed them. He appeals, in his public epistles to the Corinthians and Romans, two large assemblies in two noted cities, Rom. xv. 18. 2 Cor. xii. 11. These letters were to be read by the churches, and they published his vindication. And let it be observed too, that several among the Corinthians were his professed adversaries, and had set themselves up against him, and endeavoured to deny his apostleship. 1 Cor.

ix. 1, 2. *If I be not an apostle to others, I am*
C
unto

unto you; for ye are the seal, or proof, of my apostleship, by receiving divine gifts from me.

4. Upon closer examination of the Bible, St. Paul found, that Christ's rising from the dead was agreeable to the revelations that God had made to mankind in former ages, agreeable to the prophecies of the prophets his predecessors, and particularly agreeable to the explications of those scriptures by his forefathers, and the promises contained in his own native religion, and in the books which teach it; Acts xiii. 30—37. and eminently in that great type and figure of him, Jonah the prophet, who lived again after he had lain three days and nights in the belly of the whale, in the heart of the sea, Matt. xii. 39, 46. which was fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ.

5. By conferring with others of his own nation, and his own religion, who were well acquainted with Jesus Christ in his life-time, he found the same truth confirmed by them; for they had seen Jesus Christ, and eat and drank with him after he rose from the dead: So Peter and James, as Gal. i. 18, 19. And they confirmed the same doctrine by their testimony to him, and by gifts and miracles, as well as by their own personal knowledge.

6. He saw the blessed and amazing effects of the resurrection of Christ among the Gentiles, who were once grossly ignorant idolaters, devoted to gross superstitions, slaves to every lust, and given up to all abominations; as they are described

described Rom. i. 18, &c. Gal. iv. 8. Eph. iv. 17. 1 Cor. vi. 11. But they were changed by this gospel, and made new creatures.

Before I proceed any further, I would make two or three *Remarks*.

Rem. 1. *Which of all the infidels of the Jewish or Heathen nations, which of all the unbelievers and apostates in a Christian land, ever could pretend to bring such powerful and convincing arguments against the resurrection of Christ, as St. Paul had for it? Who hath ever attempted or presumed to prove that Jesus Christ continues still among the dead, by such effectual arguments as Paul had to prove that he is alive? St. Paul's own reason exercising itself on these arguments, could not resist the power of them, but he became a captive to the force of this reasoning, and a rational believer, and a zealous preacher of a risen Jesus.*

Rem. 2. *How necessary it is for Christians, whose life and hopes depend on the New Testament, to be well satisfied that St. Paul was in the right, and that St. Paul's doctrine is true.* For it is evident, that a great part of our religion, at least in the clearness, and fulness, and glory of it, is derived from his writings. His writings make up near half the New Testament.

Many of the articles of our religion would be less plain, and more doubtful, if we did not borrow light from St. Paul's writings. Many

a comfortable expression which our souls rest upon would be lost and useless to us, if we are not satisfied of the truth of what St. Paul tells us, as one commissioned by our risen Saviour. Many a sweet and powerful promise, on which Christians have lived and died, would lose its sweetness and its force, if we doubt of the truth and authority of the epistles of Paul.

What would some of you have done without several chapters, and many verses in them? as Rom. iv. and v. 8, 12, 14. I mean particularly with regard to the doctrine of original sin, derived from Adam, and the salvation by Christ, his priesthood, his royalty, and the use and benefit of afflictions, Heb. xi. xii. &c. Our resurrection from the dead, and our eternal happiness, 1 Cor. xv. and 1 Theff. iv. and many others?

And of how great advantage is it to us, that St. Paul has foretold, in plain language, the rise and characters of Antichrist, 2 Theff. ii. 3—12. and the destruction of that state, to forewarn us, and to give us comfortable hopes and expectations?

It is a matter therefore of great and heavenly importance, for us Christians to be well established in the belief of St. Paul's conversion, his faith, and his apostleship, and for this end we shall do well to remember these proofs and arguments which convinced him that Jesus was risen from the dead. Other
holy

holy writers have told us more of the life, actions, death, and resurrection of Christ, in the particular circumstances thereof; but St. Paul has told us more of the blessed consequences of these transactions.

And let it be always kept in mind by us, that he was in a special manner the apostle to the Gentile nations, of which Great Britain is a large province, and a remarkable part; so that, in his writings he speaks directly to us, and we are bound to attend to him.

Rem. 3. *It is very reasonable to conclude, we may safely believe what St. Paul believed and taught about this subject of the resurrection of Christ.* For if we have but reason to believe that this was Paul's character, faith, and practice, and these are the reasons of his belief, what should discourage or stagger us?

Let us sum up the force of this argument, and put it together.

Here is a wise, learned, sincere, honest man, bred up a Pharisee, in a strong opposition to Christ, and the doctrine of his resurrection, zealous for another religion, even the religion of his fathers and his country, who yet saw reason to renounce all his ancient prejudices, and submit to receive this new and strange doctrine, who believed and professed this gospel, which he once grievously persecuted, and afterwards preached it, with much fatigue, danger, and suffering,

supported it with courage, and constant divine zeal and piety, and the practice of every virtue; through his whole life, gloried in his perpetual sufferings for it, lived upon the comforts derived from it, died in defence of it, and sealed it with his blood, and left it as a chief treasure to those whom he loved best in this world, even to the churches of Christ.

Now we have not this account of Paul from mere hearsay and tradition, but we have his own testimony to all this in his writings, which have been delivered down to us through many ages: And no man of sense can reasonably doubt whether they are his writings or no, any more than we can doubt the writings of Julius Cæsar, or Seneca, Livy, or Virgil. I add this further: Concerning the vigour and spirit of his writings, and the force of argument contained in them, we have the testimony of some of his greatest adversaries, as he himself represents the case. *His letters*, say they, *are weighty and powerful*, and he was not ashamed to appeal to themselves, and threaten them, that he would make it appear that his practice towards them should have as much force and power as his letters had, when he came the second time to visit them, 2 Cor. x. 10, 11. And we have the testimony of two others, particularly Luke the physician, in his history of the Acts of the Apostles, who was a fellow-traveller with him;

him; and Peter, who was another of his countrymen, in his epistles, bears witness to him, and to his writings; besides the testimony of all the Christian writers from the beginning of Christianity, 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16. Which writings of St. Paul are dignified by St. Peter himself, with the name of the *scriptures*, ver. 16. they being both men inspired by God, and of chief repute among the apostles.

I proceed now to enquire, *What were these blessed effects on men in the Heathen world, whereby Paul's doctrine of the resurrection of Christ was further confirmed and established.*

And here I might talk largely of the idolaters that were turned from their superstitions to the worship and love of the true God, of their abandoning their former vices, and their superstitious and sinful customs of their nations, and the reformation of their lives and manners, to goodness and holiness, &c. but I shall confine myself only to those effects which bear a more apparent relation to the resurrection of Christ; and such are these that follow: (*viz.*)

1. *How many dead sinners were made alive to God, and virtue, piety, and universal holiness, by preaching this doctrine of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? What encouragement for hope of pardon for the worst of sinners in this blessed doctrine of a dying and a rising Saviour? What an assurance of*

full atonement made to the justice of God, in that Jesus, who, in death, took our sins upon him, is now discharged from the dead, and his dismissal from the grave is a full token and proof of it. *He died for our offences, and rose again for our justification*, Rom. iv. ult.

If Christ be yet under the pain of death, as the apostle argues, 1 Cor. xv. 17. and be not risen; *then our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins*: But if he be risen, then our faith and hope are confirmed, and our sins are atoned for, and our souls are pardoned, if we trust in him.

O how many guilty consciences are made easy, and that upon solid grounds, by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead? He is a *God of peace, and reconciled to sinners, who brought Jesus Christ from the dead, by virtue of the blood of the everlasting covenant*, Heb. xiii. 20. Rom. viii. 34.

Several of the dead saints arose after his resurrection, and that by the virtue of it, Matt. xxvii. 53. as an emblem of the many dead souls that should rise from a death in sins and trespasses by the same influence, Eph. ii. 5, 6.

A risen Saviour hath, according to the apostle's preaching, given them *repentance and remission of sins*, Luke xxiv. 46, 47. They are raised from a death in sins, by virtue of the resurrection of Christ.

2. *How*

2. *How many earthly, carnal, and sensual souls, have been made heavenly-minded by faith in a risen Saviour?* Col. iii. 1. Many there are, who have felt the power of the word. ‘If ye are risen with Christ, set your affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the Father’s right-hand.’

A risen Jesus calls the soul upward, and heavenward.

What have we here on earth worth living for, since Jesus is risen from the dead, hath left the world, and gone to heaven? Jesus, our hope, our life, our eternal joy, Col. i. 27.

This gospel of a risen Saviour hath done more to refine the heart from earth, and flesh, and sensuality, and the love of this world, and turn it to God, and things heavenly, than all the reasonings of philosophers through all ages, and in all nations. Compare the cities where they disputed with the churches which Paul planted, and then judge.

3. *How many captives of Satan have been released by the power of Jesus, since his release from the grave?* The devil had no power to hold Christ in the fetters of death, Acts xiii. 37, 38. and hath been forced to release thousands of his slaves by the authority of a risen Jesus, Col. ii. 15. ‘And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.’

Pfalm

Pfalm lxxviii. 18. 'Thou hast received gifts
 ' for men, even for the rebellious, that the
 ' Lord God might dwell among them.' And
 Eph. iv. 8, 9, 13, 15. 'He led captivity cap-
 ' tive, and gave gifts unto men, whereby
 ' they were made prophets, teachers, mini-
 ' sters, &c.'

4. *How many fearful and feeble creatures
 have grown bold and victorious in sufferings,
 and have conquered death itself, by faith in a
 dying and rising Saviour?* 'Thanks be to
 ' God, who giveth us the victory, through
 ' Jesus Christ our Lord.' 1 Cor. xv. 57.
 How many believers have laid down their
 bodies in the dust with sweet satisfaction and
 joy, through faith in the resurrection of
 Christ, and have triumphed over the grave?
 'O death, Where is thy sting? O grave,
 ' Where is thy victory?'

St. Paul had seen abundance of this work
 performed, through the nations where he
 planted the Christian churches, and these
 wonders of salvation wrought among the
 Gentiles, by his preaching of Jesus, and his
 resurrection; and every one of these wonders
 confirmed his belief, that Jesus who was
 dead, is now alive.

A General REMARK on this Head.

It greatly confirms our holy religion, when
 we hear of these blessed effects of the resur-
 rection

rection of Christ in other persons; but our own personal hope must be established by feeling these effects in ourselves.

Enquire into your own state under these four particulars last-mentioned. Search into your own souls, what have every one of you felt of these blessed and divine effects; and let not this discourse only confirm your faith, but let it awaken and raise your hearts to a share of holy and perpetual joy.

Some GENERAL MEDITATIONS, drawn from the Text and Discourse.

I. However it hath been, and however it is, a shameful matter of doubt and enquiry among *infidels* in a Christian land, in our world, whether Jesus, who was put to death, be alive or no, *yet it is no matter of doubt or enquiry in the world above, or the world beneath, in heaven or in hell.* There his dominion and power are well known: Nor will it be any matter of doubt hereafter in our world, when he that was dead shall come in his Father's name, vested with power, and enthroned in glory, to judge the unbelieving nations, and all the sons of infidelity. He was once unknown in this world, living and dying, but will not be so for ever, 1 Jo. iii. 1. The great enquiry between Paul and his adversaries was about this strange person; it was of one Jesus, who is spoken of as an unknown

known man. And he was so for a time, but it will not be so for ever. The world once knew him not, John i. 10. but he shall be most remarkably and illustriously manifested one day.

2. *How little mention soever was made of the death and resurrection of Christ, and especially of the doctrines derived thence, in his own preaching in public while he lived; yet these are evidently and continually insisted on in the preaching of his apostles, as things of the greatest moment in Christianity. Let not these things therefore be strange or unheard of in our ministration of this gospel, since it is built upon them.*

It was not proper that Christ should too freely publish these things to the world, when they had not been actually transacted among men, nor was it so fit that he should speak so particularly of the consequences and effects of them, when they were not actual facts, yet he gave sufficient notice to the world, and much more to his disciples by way of prophecy, that they might expect them. And as he did not talk of these events freely and publicly, so he could not so properly talk of the consequent blessings of them. This was left to be done by his apostles, after those events were come to pass. ‘Many things I have to say,’ (says our blessed Lord) ‘but ye cannot bear them yet,’ John xvi. 12.

3. Let us remember, that *whatsoever advantages*

vantages or blessings we can derive from the death of Christ, they all depend on his resurrection. His being dead will be of no avail to our souls, either for pardon, or sanctification, or future happiness, unless he be risen again, 1 Cor. xv. 14, 17. ‘If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; ye are yet in your sins.’ Rom. iv. 25. ‘Jesus, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.’ When we meditate on a dying Saviour in any of his ordinances, let us remember, *the Lord is risen*; he hath fulfilled that dreadful atonement for sin in his death; he is accepted of his Father; and he has thereby manifested, that there is a way opened for the pardon of sin, and our salvation. He hath conquered death and the devil; he hath laid a foundation for our rising from the grave; he will fulfil in heaven what he hath began on earth; his throne shall consummate the work of his cross. ‘If when we were sinners we were reconciled by his death, how much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life,’ Rom. v. 10.

4. If Jesus, being dead, and alive again, is so momentous a point, so important an article in our religion, then we may remark, *that some of the chief evidences of the truth of our religion, are nearly connected with some of the chief glories, benefits, and excellencies of it;*
for

for they are all built on this same foundation, even the resurrection of our blessed Lord. These are not merely strange pieces of history, but such doctrines are built on them, which are the life of our souls.

The resurrection of Christ confirms our religion: *First*, As it gives sufficient proof that God, whose prerogative it is to raise from the dead, approves what Jesus taught: And *Secondly*, As Jesus Christ himself foretold his own resurrection; as I said before.

And it lays a foundation for some of the chief doctrines, blessings, and duties of our religion, which St. Paul preaches without end; (*viz.*) our trust in this risen Saviour, our faith in his intercession in heaven, and coming to God by him; our dependence on his government; our resignation of ourselves to him; our expectation of the Holy Spirit, and his graces, from him; our courage in death: and our joyful hope of a resurrection and eternal life.

5. *What continual matter for holy meditation should these two things furnish us with, (viz.) the death and resurrection of Christ, especially in all our addresses to God?* Heb. x. 19. and iv. 14. How delightful and how encouraging are these ideas, in all our sacred and religious transactions with God, in life and in death. *We have boldness to enter into the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, and have such an high-priest over the house of*
God

God to introduce us. How divinely agreeable in all our behaviour, in our conversation in this world. Gal. vi. 14. By the death of Christ we are dead to this world, by the death of Christ *crucified to it, and the world crucified to us.* Col. iii. 1. We should live as those who are above, whose hearts are on high, *where Christ is at the right hand of God.*

Under our carnality and earthly-mindedness let us govern ourselves by these meditations. Let us remember *we are dead to sin.*

Under all our temptations to sin, Rom. vi. 2. let us be upon our guard, remembering our being united to Christ, *in his death and his life.*

If at any time we fall under doubts of the truth of our religion, let us look up to a risen Jesus. What better supports can we have under all our afflictions, sorrows, fears, weaknesses? Rev. i. 18. *He, who was dead, is alive, and lives for evermore. Amen.* Under the apprehensions of death; 1 Cor. xv. *Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory over death and the grave by a living Christ.* O what a shame is it for professors of a dying and a risen Saviour to be dead-hearted in religion, which is our sublimest hope; to be carnally-minded, or to be afraid of death?

6. *If Jesus being dead, and being alive again is so great and important an article of our religion, and as it were the foundation on which it stands,*
then

then how wisely hath he ordered it in his gospel, that we should have a constant memorial appointed us both of his death and his resurrection? Of his death in the Lord's supper; 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25. and of his resurrection in the Lord's day? Rev. i. 10. it is the rising of Christ that gives a blessed name to this day, Acts xx. 7. JOHN xx. 19, 20. 1 Cor. xvi. 2. On the first day of the week Christ appears in his holy ordinances, and saith, *Peace be unto you*, as he did to the apostles.

The primitive Christians celebrated both these institutions on every first day of every week; that is, the Christian Sabbath, and the Lord's Supper.

We all agree to celebrate one of these, *viz.* his resurrection, every week on the first day; but how few are there that celebrate the memorial of his death in a constant attendance at the Lord's Supper, in comparison of the multitudes, who call themselves Christians?

O let us take pleasure in these sacred memorials, and practise them both with steadiness and constancy, in remembrance of Jesus, who was dead, and is alive.

Let us remember at the Lord's Supper a dying Saviour, and call to mind the great designs of his death, as many as we can; (*viz.*) to witness the truth of his gospel; to fulfil ancient predictions of his death and his resurrection; to teach us to die as an example; but, above all, to make atonement
for

for our sins, and lay a foundation for pardoning grace, and our hope of acceptance with God.

Let us remember every Lord's day to raise our thoughts to the heavenly world; where Jesus is at the Father's right-hand, Col. iii. 1, 2.

7. *Let us reflect on this delightful circumstance of our own death, and the new life of Christ, that, in both these, he was our pattern and forerunner, 2 Tim. ii. 8, 10—13. If we die with him we shall also live with him, Heb. vi. 20.*

Must we lie down in death? Jesus, the Son of God, went through the dark valley before us, and lay down in the grave, and sanctified it to us for a sleeping place, 1 Theff. iv. 13—18. His death was attended with much more terror from God and man than ours is or can be. His death hath taken away the sting from ours.

Did Jesus rise again from the dead? So shall we, if we are his sincere followers. He is our Head, *the first-born from the dead*; Col. i. 15. *and our example*, Rom. viii. 11. *The same Spirit shall quicken us*, whatsoever nation ye lived in, Rome, or Jerusalem, Asia, or Corinth, or Great-Britain, or in what age soever! 1 Cor. xv. 20, 23, 49. 2 Cor. iv. 14. And it will be a divine joy to meet holy Paul, our great apostle, and our teacher, among the holy saints, who

50 *St. Paul's Divine Commission, &c.* DISC. II.
has gone through so many deaths and dangers, to acquaint us with this gospel.

Was it so strange a thing to tell us, that one dead man, even Jesus, should be alive again after his death? How strange and glorious a sight will it be, when all the dead in Christ, thousands and ten thousands, shall be made alive, with their Lord Jesus at the head of them. *Rejoice for ever in the Lord,* and comfort yourselves with this divine consolation. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE III.

The Difference between the LAW
and the GOSPEL:

I N

Several SERMONS preached at Bury-street,
December, 1731.

Gal. iii. 21, 22.

*Is the law then against the promises of God?
God forbid: For if there had been a law
given which could have given life, verily
righteousness should have been by the law:
But the scripture hath concluded all under
sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus
Christ might be given to them that believe.*

I HAVE long had a design to explain this
text to you, because it seems to be a key
whereby we are let into the sense and mean-
ing of this apostle, in his long and laboured
arguments about the *law* and *gospel*, in his

epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, and in the constant distinction that he there observes between them.

These Galatians, who were converted to the faith of Christ, had been closely beset by some zealous Judaizing Christians, who would fain have had them circumcised, and engaged to keep the Jewish law, Chap. vi. 12, 13. The apostle, who well understood the liberty of the gospel, would not suffer them to be thus imposed upon; and therefore he argues, he allures, he threatens, he denounces, he uses all the proper methods of an apostle, and a preacher of Christianity, to establish them in the *liberty wherewith Christ had made them free*, and to guard them against yielding a title of compliance with the Jewish ceremonies and bondage.

He shews them, in this chapter, that the *promise* was given to Abraham, the great believer, with all the blessings of salvation contained in it, and to all those who imitate his faith, by trusting in the gospel of Christ; for they are *the seed of Abraham*, ver. 8, 9. And the law curses and condemns sinners; Gal. iii. 10. but it does not, it cannot save them, ver. 11. And that *the law, which came in four hundred years after the promise to Abraham*, could not *disannul the promise, or make it of none effect*. The question arises then in the 19th verse; *To what end then serveth the law?* The answer is, To shew them their sins,

sins, and to keep alive a sense of sin among them, till Christ should come, who was to remove sin: Then comes in the *objection* of my text, *Is not the law then against the promises?* Is not the *promise to Abraham* contradicted by the *law given to the Jews?* No; by no means; for they were designed for two different purposes. The law was given for special and peculiar reasons in this life, to the Jews: The *promise* was given to Abraham, and, through him, to all Gentile, as well as Jewish *believers*, for eternal life. Whereas,

‘ if there had been a law given which could
 ‘ have given life, *i. e. eternal life*, verily righte-
 ‘ ousness should have been by the law: But
 ‘ the scripture hath concluded all under sin,
 ‘ that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ
 ‘ might be given to them that believe.’

Let us first examine the meaning of the *words* and *phrases* in my text.

Quest. 1. What is meant by *law in general*, and *the law here spoken of in particular?*

Ans. A *law* is the will of a superior, signified to us, or laid within the reach of our knowledge; which, if we obey, we are pronounced righteous, and obtain a right to any blessings promised to the obedient; but if we disobey we are guilty, and are laid under a sentence of condemnation. I say, the will of a superior, *signified to us*, or *laid within our reach*, because the Gentiles, *having not the revealed law of God*, are a law to themselves;

selves; because the great and general rules of it, are so far written in their hearts and consciences, as that they might be found out by reason and diligence, and honest enquiry; and in this sense they are set within our reach.

A law of God requires that the obedience of the creature be *perfect, without defect*, persevering to the end of the time which God hath appointed; and it must be also *personal*, or performed by himself, not by a surety or substitute. *A law of God* is such a constitution of God, as pronounces righteous those who fully comply with all its requirements; but it accepts of no less than it requires, nor does it own any thing for *righteousness* which is not perfect, Rom. ii. 7. ‘Who by patient ‘continuance in well doing’ (Greek, continuance in a good work, or in working good) ‘seek for glory, honour, and immortality, ‘eternal life.’ Gal. iii. 12. ‘The man that ‘doth them shall live in them.’ Jam. ii. 10. ‘For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and ‘yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.’

The Jewish *law* given at Sinai is the particular law here meant in the first part of the verse: The law *which was given four hundred years after the promise*; even the whole *law of Moses*, given to the Jewish nation.

Quest. 2. What is this *promise*?

Ans. The promise to Abraham, that all the *nations should be blessed in him*: That he
and

and his seed should be heirs of an inheritance, and that God *should be their God*. It is, in short, the *gospel of salvation* contained in the promise given to Abraham, see Gal. iii. 8. ‘The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thy seed shall all nations be blessed.’ And it is called the promise, to distinguish it from the *law of Sinai*, and indeed from all *proper laws*: For as I shall shew, the *gospel* does not save us in the way of a *law*; and therefore it is not a *proper law*.

Quest. 3. What is meant by the *law’s giving life*?

Ans. The word is *σωτοποιησαι*, which more naturally signifies *quicken*ing, or *bringing a dead thing into life*, by putting spirit or life into it, or by making it active in a vital manner: And so it might seem to imply giving new spiritual life to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. But the whole context rather constrains us to construe it, *the giving a title to eternal life and happiness to men in a judicial or legal manner*. This no law of God can do, as the apostle here asserts.

Quest. 4. What is meant by *righteousness*?

Ans. A *justifying righteousness*, or a sentence of justification, a rectitude in the court of God, a freedom from punishment, and a right to life, which is the natural and proper effect of perfect obedience to any law of

of God given to men. But this blessing may be given also in another way, (*viz.*) by the free grace of God, without any such obedience or righteousness of our own working.

Quest. 5. What are we to understand by the *scripture concluding all under sin?*

Ans. It signifies that the scripture, or the word of God, declares that all mankind are sinners, *there is none righteous, no, not one:* And, as sinners, they are under a sentence of condemnation by the law of God, whatsoever law they are under, whether the *law of nature*, or any *laws of revelation*: Forasmuch as no man hath ever perfectly fulfilled any law that God had given him, and therefore all are come short of justification and life; all are *fallen short of the glory of God*, promised to obedience. See this at large, both declared, pronounced, and argued, Rom. iii. 9—20. *By the law shall no flesh living be justified, &c.*

Quest. 6. What is that *promise given by the faith of Christ to them that believe.*

Ans. The promise of salvation, and the inheritance of heaven, typified by the land of Canaan, given originally and eminently to Abraham, and *his seed*, and continued to those who are his spiritual seed, (*viz.*) who believe or trust in Christ, who is the Messiah promised to Abraham: For by faith in Christ we are *made the children of Abraham*, Gal. iii. 29. *i. e.* as we are imitators of his faith, so

we

we are invested in his benefits; *i. e.* those who imitate Abraham by trusting in the mercy of God through the Messiah, now he is come in the flesh, as Abraham trusted in him before he came, are accounted, in the sight of God, the children or posterity of Abraham, and are partakers of those blessings of the inheritance of eternal life, which was promised to Abraham, under types and figures of the land of Canaan: Gal. iii. 7, 8, 9, 29. And as Abraham was made a child of God by trusting in the ancient promise, so we are made the children of God by faith, or trusting in Jesus Christ the Messiah, Gal. iii. 26.

Having explained the words so particularly, I come to lay down these Observations.

I. Observ. *There is a constant and happy harmony between the several revelations of God to men.* The promise to Abraham, or the gospel proposed and preached to him, is not contrary to the law given by Moses to the Jews.

The *law* signifies the precepts of God, revealed or discovered to men, more particularly to the Jews.

The *gospel* is the promise of the special blessings of God revealed or discovered to men, particularly to Abraham of old, and to us in a plainer manner, in these latter days.

Here I shall shew, in the first place, that the *law* and *gospel*, *i. e.* the precept and the promise, cannot contradict one another; for they

they both run through all the different dispensations that ever God gave to the children of men since the fall.

Secondly, The *law* and *gospel* do not contradict one another, for they are two different discoveries of the mind and will of God, made to men for very different purposes.

The *law*, since the fall of Adam, was given for the discovery or conviction of sin, and to shew men not only their duty, but also, how exceeding sinful their natures are, and how unable they are to fulfil their duties perfectly; and therefore to lay them under a sense of guilt and condemnation. The *promise*, or *gospel*, was given for the relief of guilty man, whom the law had condemned, and to provide a righteousness, or justification, and life, for them, who, according to the law, had a sentence of death passed upon them. Therefore the law is called the *ministration of condemnation and death*, and the gospel the *ministration of the spirit and righteousness*, or of justification and eternal life, 2 Cor. iii. 7, 8, 9.

I confess, if the law had been given for the same end as the gospel, if the law had been given for man ruined and sinful, to obtain life and salvation by it as well as the gospel, then they might have been supposed to contradict one another, and the objection in my text had stood firm, and we could not have easily and fairly answered it; but since they

they are given for different purposes, they are but different revelations of God, which are made happily subordinate one to another, and their different ends and designs are both attained. The *law* convinces and condemns sinners, and the *gospel* relieves and pardons them, justifies and saves them, see Rom. iii. 20—22, &c. Gal. iii. 10—14.

Object. 1. But doth not St. Paul himself say, that the *law was ordained for life?* Rom. vii. 10.

Answer. 1. Perhaps St. Paul might mean only to shew his former opinion, *that he thought it was ordained to give life*, Rom. vii. 10, 11, 13. But supposing this to be the real design of the words, it signifies no more than that the law was designed or ordained to give life and happiness to every one that perfectly fulfilled it, Rom. ii. 7. and x. 5. But in Gal. iii. 10. ‘Curfed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written ‘in the book of the law, to do them.’ The law could have given life indeed to Adam, if he had continued to obey it; and the law could give life still, if men were perfectly innocent, and perfectly obedient; for the law is not weak in itself, or unable to give life, but only through the infirmity of our flesh, to fulfil the law ever since the fall of Adam, by whom sin entered into our natures, and death entered into the world by sin, Rom. viii. 3. ‘What the law could not do, in that it was
‘ weak

‘weak,’ (not in itself,) but ‘through the flesh,
 ‘God sending his own Son in the likeness of
 ‘sinful flesh,’ (and as a sacrifice) ‘for sin, con-
 ‘demned sin in the flesh; that the righteous-
 ‘ness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who
 ‘walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.’

Answw. 2. The Jewish law was brought in to shew how transgressions abounded, Rom. v. 20. Gal. iii. 19. ‘The law entered that sin
 ‘might abound,’ or might appear to abound;
 ‘for by the law is the knowledge of sin,’
 Rom. iii. 20.

Object. 2. Were none of the Jews saved, to whom the law of Sinai was given, and who were under this law? Were not all of them condemned by it?

Answw. Yes, they were all condemned by this law in the sight of God, considered as the lord of souls or consciences; for they all had broke it in several instances: Nor could the *services* there required *purify their consciences*, Heb. ix. 9. But several of them were saved by the promise to Abraham, *i. e.* by the gospel, which was contained in the five books of Moses, and was often intermingled with the declarations of the law: The promise to Abraham, or the gospel, was not annulled but continued, established and ratified by the revelations of Moses, Gal. iii. 17. ‘The law
 ‘which was four hundred and thirty years
 ‘after, cannot disannul it, that it should make
 ‘the promise of none effect.’ And Rom. iii.

21. *The righteousness of faith, or justification of the gospel, as witnessed by the law and the prophets.* So Abraham was saved; so David; by the grace of God in the covenant of promise, Rom iv. 3, 6. But *not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no man living was or could be justified.*

Let us now recollect the explication of the words *law, giving life, and righteousness*, in short, that we may more easily apply the words in reading what follows, and so proceed to the next *Observation*.

Observ. II. *God would have appointed the justification of fallen man to have been by some law of his giving, if any law could have given such a poor sinful perishing creature justification, or a title to eternal life.*

And the *reasons* for it may be these.

1. *Because God is not wont to change his methods of government, where he sees them effectual to attain the ends of that government.* He is an unchangeable God, and doth not need second thoughts to mend his own first contrivances, or to change his conduct towards man, unless the case of his creatures and the nature of things require it. The law which was given at first to man in Paradise, and in innocency, had continued the same instrument of the government of God, if the case of fallen man had not required an alteration. But God was not willing all mankind, who
were

were condemned by the law, should be utterly ruined, and perish in their folly; and therefore he changed his dispensation. The *law could not give life*, because it required more than fallen man could perform; and therefore, through the weakness of man's fallen and corrupted nature, the law became incapable of justifying man; *i. e.* it was weak to justify man by reason of the *flesh*, and to pronounce a sentence of righteousness or justification on him, because he was a feeble, guilty, disobedient creature. He had sinned already, and his passions and fleshly appetites were too strong for his reason, and are rising up continually against the commands of the law, and therefore God brought in the gospel, and gave a promise to our first parents as soon as they fell, and made his *gospel* as well as his *law*, the instrument of governing his fallen creature man. 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared:' Psal. cxxx. *i. e.* That there may be piety and religion maintained in the world.

2. If the law could have given life to fallen man, righteousness or justification should have been by the law, *that God might magnify this original law, and make it honourable.* This would have shewn it was not only a law fit to govern innocent man, but to recover fallen man too. The law hath a great glory in it, in that it is the transcript of the holy name of God; it is *holy, just, and good,*
Rom.

Rom. vii. 12. And it would have been a great honour put on the law, if it could have recovered a sinful ruined creation.

If fallen man could have performed this law, and answered the demands of it, here had been a glorious display of all the wisdom and majesty, goodness and holiness, which first made the law of God exemplified in the recovery of a poor, fallen, perishing creature, by this law of his. But this could not be. *The law was weak, and insufficient for this purpose, through the flesh; i. e. through the weakness of fallen man.*

3. If the law could have given life, righteousness should have been appointed and obtained for fallen man by it; *because God would never have been at the expence of a gospel, if there had been no need of it, to recover fallen man, and to do that which the law could not do.* God does not lay out his thoughts or counsels, nor his riches of grace, in needless things, or in useles contrivances. Now if the law would have attained this end, (*viz.*) the justification and salvation of man, then the gospel had been needless; then all these glorious riches of grace, and these counsels of wisdom, and mysteries of mercy, had been in vain.

Surely if the law could have done this work, the blessed God would never have sent his own Son out of his bosom, upon such a long journey to this sinful province of his
 dominion,

dominion, to this lower world, to take flesh and blood upon him, and to be exposed to sufferings and labours, reproaches and shame, pain and anguish, and death, if the law could have done the work of the salvation of man without it. God hath more value for the peace, and honour, and life of his Son, than to expose it at this rate; but it is plain from scripture, that the *Son of God was sent into the world to do that which the law could not do*, Rom. viii. 3. These treasures of wisdom and goodness, these riches of grace, which appear in the gospel, were all laid out to save a ruined creature, whom the law could not save; otherwise *Christ died in vain*; so the apostle saith expressly, Gal. ii. 21.

Observ. III. *No law could give life and salvation to poor fallen man.*

Here let it be considered, that all laws are either *moral*, *i. e.* drawn from the nature of God and the creature, or they are *positive*; *i. e.* such as are appointed merely by the will of God, for particular purposes, and in particular seasons or circumstances. Again *moral* laws are either such as belong to *all mankind in general*, *whether innocent or sinful*, or they are such as belong *only to sinful and fallen man*. Now none of all these sorts of laws can save sinful mankind. Let us prove it thus:

1. *Moral*

1. *Moral laws*, such as oblige all mankind in *general*, are contained in a due *love to God and man*, but fallen man can never be saved or justified by this law, because all these moral laws of God require perfect obedience, and cannot justify us without it. God is a most holy, a most wise, and righteous God, a most perfect being, and the relation between God and creatures, requires the creature should honour him, and obey him in perfection, and without any defect.

The *moral law* did require this perfection in the state of innocence; and, as it is taken into the constitution of the gospel, it does not diminish its requirements: It still requires perfection of obedience in all instances of thought, word, and deed, and that without any defect or intermission. The gospel doth not abate or lessen the requirements of the law, but it shews a way to relieve us when we have broken it, or cannot fulfil it, and the reasons are plain.

If the law did not now require perfection of obedience, but only sincere imperfect obedience, then the creature, if he were but sincere and honest, would have fulfilled the law, though he were not perfectly holy.

And then imperfection of obedience would have been, as it were, established by the law, if it could obtain salvation for fallen man.

Then also the imperfections of obedience to the law would not have been *sin*; for if

they were, they could not have made up a saving righteousness.

The *gospel* is a constitution of grace which accepts of less obedience from man than the law requires, and pardons the imperfect obeyer for the sake of Christ the Mediator; but still the law requires perfection, which mankind cannot pay. Now that man cannot pay it is evident, not only from the conscience of every man in the world, for if it be awakened to see the extent of the law, it must condemn itself; but the scripture expressly asserts it in many places, 'There is none righteous, no, not one,' Rom. iii. 10. Eccl. vii. 20. 'There is not a just man on earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.' 2 Chron. vi. 36. 'There is no man who sinneth not.'

2. Moral laws, such as *belong only to sinful man*, and oblige him, can never justify a sinner, or save him. Let us enter into particulars.

The requirements thereof are *repentance* for sin, *sorrow* and *shame* for past follies, and a *displeas'dness* with self for being guilty; *trusting or hoping* in the forgiving grace of God, *praying to him* for pardon and grace, and universal *watchfulness* against every temptation, under a sense of former failings. This the very light of nature and reason teaches a sinner, as well as the word of God requires

quires it. But this law cannot justify any creature, and that for two plain reasons.

(1.) Because *all our repentance, or new endeavours after obedience, cannot make atonement for our past sins.* A righteous governor doth not suppose that the tears, and sorrows, and repentance of criminals and malefactors, make any satisfaction to the public for his crimes, nor make due reparation to the government for his offences; nor are sufficient to procure pardon for criminals. A penitent criminal is often executed to fulfil the demands of the law, and to secure the authority of the government. And what trifling things are our sorrows, to answer for the dishonour done to the law of God our Maker.

(2.) Because *even our repentance itself, our hope or trust in grace, our prayer for mercy, our endeavours after new obedience, are all imperfect;* whereas the law requires a perfection even of this sort of duties, a perfect hatred of sin, a perfect displeasure with self on account of it, perfect sincerity in every thought, word, and action, and perfect watchfulness in guarding against temptation, and striving after new holiness. But how shamefully do we fail in these, and destroy our claims to justification and life, even if we were to be tried only by this part of the law which requires repentance at the hand of criminals: We see then that no moral law can justify us.

3. Let us come to *positive laws*, *i. e.* such rites, and forms, or ceremonies, as are appointed by the mere free will of God, for particular purposes; such as *sacrifices*, *circumcision*, *washings*, *baptism*, *the Lord's supper*, &c. These cannot justify us, because it is not in the power of any positive rites or ceremonies we can perform, to make up for the neglect of moral duties, or the violation of moral commands. They were never given for this end, nor appointed for this purpose. Heb. x. 1, 2, 5. 'It is not possible the blood of bulls and goats can take away sins.' Nor can *circumcision* cut off the vices of the heart. No nor can *baptism* wash us from our spiritual defilements. Nor can the *Lord's supper* give us spiritual life and nourishment. It is not outward performances of any kind can stand instead of real holiness, much less can they answer for our past iniquities. No law of *commandments*, *written in ordinances*, can give righteousness and life to a sinful creature; for they were never ordained for that end.

Quest. *What were they ordained for then?*

Ans^w. 1. To shew us what sinful and defiled creatures we are, who have need of such washings, &c. and to give intimations that we are worthy of death, who need such sacrifices by the death of so many living creatures, to make atonement for our sins, and to die in our room.

Ans^w.

Answ. 2. To give some typical hints that there is grace to be obtained of God, and there is a way for atonement for sin and salvation provided for sinful man.

4. The last reason why no laws can justify or save fallen man is this: (*viz.*) *All laws, whether moral or positive, may command; but they give no power to obey, and therefore cannot give life.* It is the promise that gives life. It is the gospel and grace of God that enables us to obey the law, even so far as the best of men do obey it in this life. The law commands, but it gives no strength to obey. Rom. v. 6. *When we were without strength Christ died for us, to obtain life and strength, to yield obedience to the law from principles of faith and love.* It is the gospel that brings spirit and life with it, to incline our hearts to obey the law. Gal. iii. 2. ‘Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?’ Heb. viii. 8, 10. ‘This is the covenant I will make after those days, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their heart.’

Object. *But is it a righteous thing with God to give man a law which cannot be fulfilled, or perfectly obeyed by him?*

Answ. 1. It is righteous to give innocent man a law which at first he was well able to fulfil; and this law continues in its force and demands, though man hath lost his innocency, and by his wilful crimes hath rendered

himself unable to fulfil this law. The sin of the creature, and his own rendering himself unable to fulfil his Maker's law, doth not make void the law of his Maker, and abolish its commands.

Simile. Suppose a servant hath an order from his master to carry a message to his neighbour, if instead of going into the neighbour's house whither he was sent, he goes into an alehouse or tavern, there drowns his senses and his natural powers in liquor, that he hath so weakened himself, that he can neither walk nor speak; he can neither go to the place where he was sent, nor deliver his message: I would ask, Doth his master's command cease, or is his command abolished? And is his authority at an end in this instance, because his servant hath rendered himself incapable of fulfilling it, either with his feet or his tongue? This would be an easy way to cancel a master's laws and commands, if the wickedness of a servant could have this effect.

Now apply this to the case between God and man, and see whether God may not be justified in continuing his law in its perfection of demands, though man hath lost or weakened his power to obey. Surely the moral law of God stands in force, requiring perfect obedience both of men and devils, and all intelligent beings, how feeble and impotent soever they have made themselves by their
own

own crimes: For it is a law that arises from the nature of God and the creature, and from the relation that is between them; and therefore it is an everlasting law.

Answ. 2. But God is still farther to be justified in this matter; for though man hath weakened himself by his fall, he hath not utterly lost his *natural* powers, his natural ability of obeying the law. He has an understanding, he has a freedom of will, to choose good and refuse evil; but his will is so obstinately bent upon sin, vanity, and folly, and his passions are grown so headstrong, that he will not give himself the trouble to subdue them: He willingly lets them bear him away from God: He is unwilling to obey; and this is called *a moral inability*. Now God may require such duties by his law, as thro' the weakness of the flesh, and the strength of appetite and passion, in this frail state man is *morally* or *immediately* unable to perform, though he hath a *remote* or *natural power*. An infinitely holy God cannot but command that we should never sin, never transgress the rule of righteousness, never break his pure and holy law; and yet, thro' the many infirmities of human nature, it is *morally impossible* we should perfectly keep this law, and live without sin. This Dr. Whitby himself (as much as he indulges the Arminian sentiments,) confesses in his Comment.

God therefore doth not lose his authority or right of commanding perfect obedience and perfect holiness, though man, by his folly and sin, hath rendered his will averse to God, and his evil appetites and passions strong and ungovernable: So that, upon the whole, it is plain, the *law is holy, and just, and good*, and yet cannot pronounce any man righteous, nor adjudge him to eternal life.

DISCOURSE IV.

The Difference between the LAW
and the GOSPEL:

The Second Part of this SERMON:

Gal. iii. 21, 22.

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

OBSERV. IV. *Scripture hath concluded all mankind under sin, hath shut us all up as prisoners under condemnation. Here I have nothing to do but to cite several texts of scripture, some of which have been before-mentioned, to prove that no man hath perfectly fulfilled the demands of the law, and consequently, that all mankind lie under a*
sentence

sentence of condemnation, according to the law of God. James iii. 2. 'For in many things we offend all.' And ii. 10. 'Who-soever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all,' because he dishonours that authority which hath enacted all. Rom. ii. 9, 10. 'Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil.' And iii. 9, 10, 19, 20, 23. 'Are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin, as it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one. Now we know that what things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' Gal. iii. 10, 11. 'Curst is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them: But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for the just shall live by faith.'

A R E M A R K.

Here by the way we may take notice, what is *condemnation*, and what is *justification by the law of God*. It is the sentence of God

as

as it stands in the written law, or in the law of nature, pronouncing the creature, whether he be righteous or guilty, according to such different characters which are found upon him. It is not any new act put forth by God himself toward his creatures, but the constant sentence of his own law, declaring such a person *righteous* according to his performance of the law, or such a person *guilty* according to his non-performance of it. In like manner *justification by the gospel* is not a new act in God, but the sentence of his gospel, pronouncing humble penitents and believers in *Christ* pardoned, forgiven, and accepted unto eternal life.

According to the different characters of men the word of God, *i. e.* his *law* or his *gospel*, pronounces them guilty and condemned, or pardoned, justified, and accepted of God, unto eternal life. This is a very plain and easy doctrine to be apprehended by such weak creatures as we are.

Observ. V. *Man who is condemned by the law may be saved by the promise; i. e.* by the promise of grace and reconciliation to God, which was given first to Adam, then to Abraham, and made further known to the people of God by Moses, and David, and the prophets, according to the different revelations of God to man; but completed by the gospel of Christ, and the ministry of his apostles.

A promise

A promise to Adam, of the *destruction of the works of the devil by the seed of the woman*; as it is explained 1 John iii. 8.

A promise that *God would be our God*, and give us an *inheritance*, made to Abraham, &c. Gen. xvii. 7, 8.

A promise confirmed by many types of the Jewish law. A promise of all the blessings of the new covenant, expressed Heb. viii. 8, 10. cited from the several prophets Jeremiah and Zechariah. ‘ This is the covenant ‘ that I will make with the house of Israel ‘ after those days, saith the Lord; I will put ‘ my laws into their mind, and write them ‘ in their hearts: And I will be to them a ‘ God, and they shall be to me a people: For ‘ I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, ‘ and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.’ It is the same promise more particularly and fully set before us by Jesus Christ the Son of God, in his gospel, and by his blessed apostles in their writings; which, in plain and express language, includes in it not only pardon of sin and reconciliation to God, but the sanctification of our natures, and our preservation to eternal life, in a state of happiness, which shall never end.

Observ. VI. *The way of obtaining an interest in these promised blessings is through faith.* It is to all that trust in the grace of the gospel, so far as it was manifested in the several ages
of

of the world, *i. e.* to Adam, Abraham, and David; and as it is more fully manifested in and by Jesus Christ. It is obtained by a renouncing all claim by one's own works, and trusting in grace entirely.

If Adam was saved, it is in a way of grace and forgiveness through a Mediator, which was promised under the title of the *seed of the woman, who should bruise the head of the serpent*; and which was typified by sacrifices, and intimated by God's favourable dealings with Adam after his fall, and which promise was accepted and received by Adam's trusting or hoping in this grace.

If Abraham is saved, it is in a way of grace and forgiveness, which was promised under the title of that *seed of his, in whom all nations should be blessed*; and in that language of mercy, that *God would be his God, and would give him an inheritance*; of which Canaan was a type and figure. And *Abraham believed, or trusted in this, and it was imputed to him for righteousness*; Rom. iv. 3. *i. e.* unto his justification and acceptance.

If David was saved, it is in a way of grace and forgiveness. Psalm xxxii. 1, 2. 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity,' Rom. iv. 6, 7.

If Christians are saved, it is in a way of grace and forgiveness still, which was promised

mised to Abraham, which is revealed more particularly by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came to confirm and to fulfil the former promises, and to obtain this pardon by the sacrifice of himself. And by his own perfect obedience and sufferings, he laid a foundation for the justification of sinful creatures. If they are saved, it is not by their performing the law in any sense, but by trusting in forgiving grace, revealed and manifested through Jesus Christ. It is by trusting in another, and not in themselves; as Rom. iv. explains, from ver. 17. to the 22.

It is not in a way of claim of righteousness and eternal life, but in a way of humble dependence on grace. The *Pharisees boasted, that they were righteous, and despised others.* The young ruler in the gospel, speaking of the law of God, said, *All this have I kept from my youth.* The *Jews sought for justification by the works of the law,* and rejected Christ, Rom. ix. 31. But St. Paul, by the sight of *the law is dead to the law; i. e.* to all hopes of righteousness and life by it; Gal. ii. 16, 19. and seeks to be pardoned, accepted, and justified, by trusting in what Christ hath done and suffered on his account.

And so all Christians, Rom. iii. 22. And in this sense the gospel *justifieth the ungodly;* Rom. iv. 5. *i. e.* those who have no righteousness of their own to plead, whose best obedience is all defective.

Quest.

Quest. *But doth this gospel save and justify a man that hath no regard to the law of God? How is his obedience to the law or holiness secured, if a man be justified, or pronounced righteous, and acquitted of sin, and accepted to eternal life, by believing or trusting in the promises of grace? Surely many wicked men will say, "I trust in the promise of pardon through Jesus Christ; and is this enough? Is there no security that these believers shall be obedient to the law as far as they can, though they cannot obey it perfectly?"*

Ans. Yes, there is abundant security for their diligence in duty to the law, though they can never work out a righteousness for themselves to be justified by the law. Let these reasons be considered:

1. *It is the great design of the gospel to restore us to holiness as well as to happiness; and therefore the law, in the commands of it, runs through all the gracious dispensations of God to fallen man, as I have shewn you: And God will have no regard to them in a way of grace, who have no regard to his law in a way of obedience. The law constantly requires and points out our duty, it shews us our sin, it lays us under condemnation, and makes us seek a refuge in the gospel of forgiveness. Now the gospel is not prepared for such as knowingly and wilfully renounce the law of God which is holy, and*
just

just, and good, and who persist in this practice, and abandon the commandments of it.

Can it be ever expected that the great God should pardon and save those rebels through Jesus Christ, who knowingly and wilfully persist in their rebellions? *God forbid.* The very light of nature will not suffer us to believe this. This would be *to make Christ the minister of sin, and to build again the things which Christ came to destroy, Gal. ii. 17, 18.* For it is the design of all the blessings of the gospel to make us conformable to God, and to this law, which is the unchangeable image of his holiness. The great design of it is to make us practise love to God and our neighbour, which is *the fulfilling of the law* as far as our state of frailty permits, Rom. xiii. 10.

The design of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, is that we *might be holy, and without blame before God, in love.* Are we chosen in Christ? It is that we may be holy, Eph. i. 4. Doth God forgive us? It is that we may fear, and love, and serve him, Psalm cxxx. 4. *There is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared.* Are we redeemed with the blood of Christ? It is that we *might be a peculiar people, zealous of good works, Titus ii. 14.* Doth the grace of God bring salvation to us? *It teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live righteously, soberly, and religiously, in this present evil world, Titus ii. 11, 12.*

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We are under the law still unto Christ, as it is the rule whereby Christ governs his church, while he pardons their failures and imperfections: But we are not under the law, as it is the rule of judgment, and condemns all that have not fulfilled it. We are *freed from the curse of the law*, but not from the obligation to obedience. So the apostle, 1 Cor. ix. 21. All believers have this freedom from the curse of the law, that from a new principle of holiness and love they may fulfil the commands of the law as far as our present circumstances will admit. Rom. vii. 6. ‘But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve’ God, not in the spirit of terror and bondage, but ‘in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter,’ by a new principle of holiness, wrought in us by the Spirit of God, as a principle of love and obedience.

2. *The gospel gives us encouragement and strength to fulfil the duties of the law*, and engages us to hope in God, that we may love him, please and serve him, as a forgiving and reconciling God, which the broken law, with all its commands, threatenings, and terrors, doth not, and could never do. The law speaks only condemnation and death. *As many as labour for life under the law, and would be justified by the law, are under the curse, and may despair of life*, Gal. iii. 10.

Now despair is no spring of obedience, and hopeless labour is very feebly and negligently performed; but hope is a powerful and lasting principle of holiness. 1 John iii. 3. 'He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure.' 1 Tim. iv. 10. 'Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach;' *i. e.* in doing the will of God; 'because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them who believe.' The devils go on in sinning, because they despair; but man hath hope set before him, that he may be encouraged to obedience, and allured to pursue holiness from a principle of love and gratitude. If we are made new creatures, how can we choose but love and honour the law of God, who hath saved us by his gospel, and changed our unhappy state from sin and death to hope and joy.

Besides, it is the gospel that gives us the sanctifying Spirit, as I said before. Gal. iii. 2, 14. and Heb. viii. 10. This is that *new covenant*, according to which *he writes his law in our hearts*.

3. *No faith in the grace of God will justify men, but that which worketh by love;* Gal. v. 6. and produceth the good fruits of obedience. Abraham obeyed the call of God: James ii. 22, 26. And in this sense *his works wrought together with his faith, towards his justification*. Not that his imperfect works

in themselves do any thing to justify him, but his sincere imperfect works were the effect of his faith, and proved his faith to be alive, and true, and saving. Things are said to be done in scripture, when they are declared or manifested to be done: So Abraham is said to be *justified by works*, when his works declared and manifested his faith, whereby he was justified, James ii. 25, 26. David's faith in forgiveness was such as was accompanied with sincerity and piety, Psal. xxxii. 2. 'In whose spirit there is no guile.' It requires confession of sin, repentance, humiliation, and new watchfulness, verse 5, 6. Gal. v. 6. It must be such a *faith that purifieth the heart*, and works obedience from a principle of love, Acts xv. 9. Tit. iii. 5, 7, 8. *They who believe in Christ Jesus must be careful to maintain good works.*

4. *Without repentance and a change of heart, so as to love and to obey the law of God, we can never be fit for that happiness which God promises, and which the creature wants: Without holiness of heart we can never be prepared for heaven, which consists in the blissful vision of God, nor indeed are we capable of it. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,' Matt. v. 8. 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,' Heb. xii. 14. Indeed none can be truly happy but those who are sanctified and assimilated to the holy Jesus. A child of Satan, and an*

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enemy

enemy of righteousness, and of the law of God, can never be happy in the midst of the children of God, who have his law written in their hearts, and are ever practising obedience to his law in perfection.

Holiness indeed is a part of salvation, which consists in a release from the bondage of sin, and the power of it in our own hearts, as well as from the guilt and punishment of it in our persons. And the man who professes to receive the gospel of Christ, and hope in God for salvation, he doth not know what he professes, if he does not hope for holiness, and long for it, and desire it. If he goes to trust in Christ as a Saviour, merely from the wrath of God and hell, he doth not accept of Jesus as such a Saviour as the gospel represents him; *i. e.* a Saviour from sin, Mat. i. 21. as well as from hell and wrath.

Last REMARKS drawn from the whole Text, thus opened, explained, and proved.

1st Remark. *See why St. Paul always denies justification to be obtained by the law, i. e.* by any law whatsoever; (*viz.*) because none have fulfilled, or can fulfil, any moral law of God in perfection, and a law requires perfect obedience, in order to justification by it: Nor is it in the nature or power of it to justify those who are under it, and yield not perfect obedience. ‘Curst be every one
‘that

‘ that continueth not in all things written in ‘ the book of the law, to do them.’ The epistles to the Romans and Galatians are full of this doctrine. Whether it be the *law of nature*; Rom. ii. 14, 15. or whether the law under which the Jews were, which includes the moral, ceremonial, and political precepts of it; Rom. iii. 19, 20, 23. all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. *By the works of the law, any law whatsoever, no flesh shall be justified.* Man doth not, cannot, obtain life by any law; it cannot give life.

In this sense *all laws are laws of works.* *Do this, and live,* is their language and sense. *The man that doth them shall live in them.*

2d Remark. *See here to what a wretched and deplorable state of guilt and misery are we fallen, that no law which God can make in our circumstances can save us.* God cannot make a law which doth not require perfect holiness, in thought, word, and deed: He cannot make a law which allows sin and imperfection: For this would be, as it were, *to establish iniquity by a law,* which the holy God cannot do. The holy nature of God, as governor of his creatures, cannot but command them to be perfectly holy, under whatsoever gracious dispensations he may place them, for the relief of their guilt, weakness, and distress. His law still commands what fallen impotent creatures cannot fully obey; and therefore we are miserable.

What a hideous ruin hath the first man brought into human nature, and spread over all this lower creation? It hath weakened all our powers, hath turned our hearts away from God, hath debased our inclinations to sense, and flesh, and vanity, and made God's own rational creatures incapable of being made happy by any law that he should give them, when taken in a strict and proper sense of a law.

3d Remark. *Even the gospel of Christ, considered as a mere law, as requiring duty, and promising a reward upon full performance, cannot give life to sinful man:* For whether you take it in a large sense, and consider it as including the *moral law*, taken into the hand of Christ the Mediator, still it diminishes not its commandments, it requires perfect holiness, and abates nothing in its demands. Or whether you take it in a more limited sense, as requiring *faith and new obedience*, sincere diligence and watchfulness, yet, considered as a law, it requires the practice of these duties in greater perfection than the best of saints or Christians ever practised them; otherwise they would not sin in coming short of what the gospel requires; and therefore they cannot give life, if God should strictly judge us, according to these gentle commands of the gospel. And therefore you find, when the apostle speaks of *justification* according to the gospel, he is positive, peremptory, and
 universal,

universal, in his exclusion of all works of the law from justifying us; as in Rom. iii. and Gal. iii.

He calls the *gospel* therefore a *promise*, the *grace of God*, *the new covenant*, &c. that he may not be supposed to speak of it as justifying us under the notion of a law. He never calls the *gospel* a *law*, but in such a rhetorical or figurative sense, by way of *catechresis* or a very strong metaphor, *the law of faith*; as in Rom. iii. 27. It is as if he should say, If we must call it a law, it is a mere *law of faith*, or *trusting* in the mercy of God.

Quest. 1. *What is the gospel then? and how doth it justify us, and give life?*

Ans^w. Not as fulfillers of a law, and thereby obtaining a claim to life, but as depending upon mere mercy. The *gospel* is a constitution of the blessed God, whereby he accepts less obedience at our hands than the law requires; and that, not to make up a righteousness for our acceptance, but that God may receive us through grace, for the sake of his son Jesus Christ, who wrought a perfect obedience, or complete righteousness, to answer that law, and died to make atonement for our sins, and *redeemed us from the curse of the law*, which we had deserved. This is the express language of the *gospel*, taught us by St. Paul; Rom. iii. 23, 24. ‘All
‘ have sinned, and come short of the glory of

‘ God;’ *i. e.* of that glory which we should have obtained by a perfect obedience: But when we are justified, it is done ‘ freely by ‘ his grace, through the redemption that is in ‘ Jesus Christ.’ The law condemns us as sinners, and we must be sensible of this condemnation. The gospel shews us, that we must trust or depend merely on forgiving grace, and not pretend to any righteousness of our own, and to claim life by obeying the law ourselves. It is by our faith or dependance, not by our works, and any claim of merit. The whole strain of the apostle’s writing to the Romans hath this view in the five or six first chapters.

Quest. 2. *Is it not therefore matter of blame for us to us call the gospel a law? or the new law?*

Ans. The word *law*, when taken in a strict sense, for the will of a sovereign prince revealed, and requiring perfect obedience of his subjects, and pronouncing a subject righteous only upon this obedience, is the true notion and idea of a law: In this sense the gospel is not a *law*, for it doth not pronounce any persons righteous, and accepted to the favour of God, on account of a perfect obedience performed by them to any command which was given them.

But if a *law* be taken in a large sense, for any constitution of a governor, whereby he graciously accepts at our hands less than his
law

law requires, and pardons those offenders who are sincerely willing and desirous to obey his law, and who trust in his mercy, then the gospel may be called a *law*. *Torah*, in the Hebrew, is used in this large sense for the gospel; Isa. ii. 3. ‘Out of Zion shall go forth ‘the law,’ &c. and other places.

And *Νομος* in the Greek, may be enlarged to such an extensive sense also: But originally it signifies that which distributes to every one their due reward, according to their merit, or their services; and in this sense the gospel cannot be a *law*.

St. Paul does not usually call it so; nor can I think it the best way for ministers to represent it thus.

Yet, after all, it is but a sort of difference in words, if we do but explain the things in the right manner, and guard against those errors which we are liable to fall into on either side.

Nor would I be angry with any man, who considerately and sincerely thinks this the best way of representing and explaining the gospel, any further than to say, that St. Paul did not think it the best way, and I am much of his mind.

4th Remark. *How much should our souls bless God for the introduction of the gospel into the world, at the first promise; and even for all the promises of this new covenant, especially in this last, and best, and brightest edition,*

tion, and the administration of it by Jesus Christ, and his Spirit? As it is expressed and explained in Heb. viii. 10, 12.

Have we not sometimes had an awakening and painful sense of guilt?

Have we never thought ourselves sinners, and feared the eternal anger of God, and cried out for salvation from the condemning sentence of the broken law?

And when we have resolved, and watched, and laboured again to fulfil the holy law of God, and failed in many instances, have we not bewailed ourselves as weak and impotent creatures, as well as under the guilt of so many offences, repeated and abounding? O what abundant reason have we to bless God for the gospel of his grace, through Jesus Christ, wherein our only hope lies, and all our salvation! Even all our hopes of pardon and acceptance with God, as well as all our strength to do the will of God, and obey his law, so far as Christians are enabled and expected to do in this life.

Let us fly from the law, and its curses and condemnation, to the refuge and hope which the gospel has set before us, and live there daily, by faith in the Son of God the Saviour; for there only lies our safety from the wrath of God, and eternal destruction.

5th Remark. *What a glorious harmony will appear in the review of all the dispensations of God at the last day, between the law and*

and the gospel? The law was the instrument of God's government of his creatures, and the rule of his justice, from the beginning of the world to the end: But the gospel is the instrument of his grace for our salvation.

The law is the rule, guiding and teaching all the saints in the ways of holiness, convincing of sin, and condemning all sinners, and driving them to seek refuge in grace: And the gospel is the noble and divine remedy, discovering that grace whereby alone we can be saved.

And why may not these sentiments be part of our transporting and beatifying contemplations in the heavenly state? It is generally agreed by our divines, that the various providences of the life and state we have past through in this world, whether they have been painful or pleasant, shall be the matter of our delightful review and meditation; especially so far as they have been the happy means of our sanctification, and our preparation for the final blessedness of the heavenly state.

I am well assured there will be abundant matter of joy and thankfulness found in these different dispensations of God, *in his bringing many sons to glory*; and there will be ample instances of his providential care and glorious examples of his righteousness and his grace, in a thousand particular transactions of the blessed God, and our Lord Jesus Christ his Son, with the children of his grace: And
perhaps

perhaps there shall be such discoveries made to us of the righteousness and the grace of God in his holy law and his gospel, among these divine transactions, as will elevate our souls into higher raptures of gratitude and joy, and furnish our tongues with pleasant and everlasting *hallelujahs*.

The saints in that day shall cheerfully and thankfully recount the awful voice of God in the commands and terrors of his law, since these were the blessed means of awakening their stupid consciences, and of stirring them to a hasty flight to Jesus and his gospel, as the only and all-sufficient refuge of sinful and guilty souls. Happy creatures, who turned their eyes to his grace, when they were thus self-condemned; and trembling for fear of the immediate execution of the divine threatenings of his law.

How glorious and delightful will be the moments of these souls, when they shall review the first glimpses they had by divine grace, of the salvation and hope which was to be found for them in the encouraging language of the gospel and the promises? What new songs will arise to the Redeemer, in this review of those past events? What echoes of praise to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, while the inhabitants of the blessed world are pursuing and tracing out backward the ancient steps of the grace of God towards their recovery from
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the sin and ruin of the *first Adam*, and their entering into the covenant of salvation, thro' *Jesus Christ the second?* He was the ever-blessed *antitype* of the *first Adam*, the great Head and Lord of life and everlasting blessedness, to all who are sanctified and saved. Honour, and glory, and power, be to his holy name, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE V.

SERMONS preached at Berry-Street,
1744, and 1745.

In which

The Early Appointment of the Atonement
of CHRIST is manifested.

The First Part of this SERMON.

Rev. xiii. 8.

*The Lamb slain from the foundation of the
world.*

IN order to make the sense of these words
easy and plain, we must take into our
counsel three other texts of the New Testa-
ment: (*viz.*)

I. 1 Pet. i. 18—20. ‘Ye know ye were
‘ not redeemed with corruptible things, as
‘ silver and gold, but with the precious blood
‘ of

‘ of Christ, as of a Lamb, without blemish,
 ‘ and without spot, ver. 20. Who verily was
 ‘ fore-ordained before the foundation of the
 ‘ world, but was manifested in these last times
 ‘ for you.’ This shews us, that this Lamb
 was Jesus Christ, who was offered a sacrifice
 for the sins of the world, and thereby takes
 them away, John i. 29.

II. ACTS xv. 18. ‘ Known unto God are
 ‘ all his works from the beginning of the
 ‘ world:’ And therefore this great work of
 redeeming sinners by the death of his Son
 Jesus, as 1 Pet. i. 20. was also known to
 him.

III. Rom. iv. 17. ‘ God quickeneth the
 ‘ dead, and calleth those things which are
 ‘ not, as though they were;’ *i. e.* speaketh
 sometimes of things not yet done, as though
 they were done; therefore this Lamb is said
 to be slain from the foundation of the world,
 because it was by virtue of his death many
 other things were appointed.

God hath before the foundation of the
 world, ordained all things that regard the
 salvation and recovery of man, from the
 ruins of his fall. Sometimes the holy scrip-
 ture speaks of those things which were ori-
 ginally designed and decreed, as though they
 were actually done, though perhaps it was
 many ages afterwards before these things had
 any actual being.

It is in this sense that our Lord Jesus Christ is said to be the ‘Lamb slain before the foundation of the world;’ *i. e.* he was decreed and determined to be the Saviour of mankind; and for this end he was appointed to be a sacrifice of atonement for our sins, even before God laid the foundations of the world, Eph. i. 4, 5. He appeared as the Lamb slain for this purpose, and with this design, in the eye of God, who sees all things in one single view, whether they be things past, present, or to come. God the Father kept Jesus Christ his Son ever in his eye in this view, through all his transactions with the children of men.

It is generally supposed that Adam stood in the state of innocence but a few days at most, or a very short time after his creation, though our Lord Jesus Christ came not into this world, nor took flesh and blood upon him of the substance of the virgin Mary, till about four thousand years afterwards. Many ages ran out amongst the inhabitants of this world in that time, and even some of the transactions of God in his own eternity, before the foundation of the world, are reasonably supposed to be derived from this *very* idea, in the mind and appointment of the blessed God, because he had originally appointed that Jesus Christ should in due time take flesh and blood, and be offered as a sacrifice for the sins of men.

Here

Here we shall first enquire what are those early transactions of the blessed God in eternity, or in time, which may be supposed to have been any ways influenced by this view of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the answers are these:

1. It was in this view that *God at first decreed and designed to save and recover any part of fallen man from their ruin, sin, and misery, and chose thousands of the race of sinful mankind to be restored to his favour, and to his image:* Eph. i. 4, 5, 7. ‘Behold my servant, ‘whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my ‘soul delighteth.’ That so God might have a proper atonement made for all their sins, by our Lord Jesus Christ, in order to be reconciled to them, and to reconcile them to himself, that *they might be holy, and without blame.*

It would be too long at present to enter into this enquiry, why God required an atonement for sin, or why his justice and his grace would not unite in the salvation of fallen man without it: The great God thought it unbecoming his supreme majesty, and his character, to deal thus in a way of absolute mercy with men; and as he has determined it so in his word, this is enough for us to acquiesce therein: As Heb. ii. 10. ‘It became him for ‘whom are all things, and by whom are all ‘things, in bringing many sons unto glory, ‘to make the captain of their salvation perfect ‘through sufferings.’

τελειωσαι, *i. e.* As critics in
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the Greek language expound it, to consecrate, sanctify, or finish this captain of salvation for this service, by an atoning sacrifice.

God was pleased to make his *beloved* Son Jesus Christ his first elect; Isa. xlii. 1. and he chose all the rest in him. Eph. i. 4. ‘According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.’ He was resolved to set him up at the head of all the saved number, who was his own Son, that he should be their forerunner into heaven, and have the honour of redeeming all the sons of God, and bringing them back unto the Father: And he decreed him to be the great sacrifice for the expiation of the sins of all his chosen and favourite sons: *He has redeemed them all with his blood.*

2. It was in the view of Jesus Christ, as the great Mediator and sacrifice, *that God appointed any further communion, or any favourable communications, between himself and his fallen creature man.* It was in this view that he appointed there should be any approach of fallen man towards himself: It was in this view he gave him the first promise, and the first hope of mercy, even that the ‘seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent;’ Gen. ii. 15. by whom mankind was deceived to their ruin and destruction; and by appointing Jesus Christ to be a sacrifice for sin: It was prophesied that his heel,

heel, or the lower part of his nature, *i. e.* his body, should be bruised, in order to break the head of the serpent; as it is explained 1 John iii. 8. ‘For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil;’ *i. e.* his tyranny and dominion over man. This *seed of the woman* was the appointed sacrifice for this purpose, Gen. iii. 15. It was with this view that God enquired after lost man in the garden of Paradise, in order to recover and save him by his Son Jesus, Gen. iii. 9. ‘Adam, Where art thou?’ And he gave him the promise of recovery by this means. And as God afterwards appointed it, that *no man should come to the Father, but by the Son*; John xiv. 6. so he revealed himself as making his way towards fallen Adam, by this man Jesus; and it is by him that all that are brought back again to God have been appointed to draw near to him ever since; for he is the only appointed way.

It is also very probable that God might make clearer discoveries to our first parents in the midst of their ruined and dismal state, in and with this first promise, than Moses, the divine historian, has given us an account of, because this was to be the beginning and first pledge of their hope of any acceptance with God, and their expectation of life and salvation.

Let me here speak one awakening word to fallen sinners: Did you never give yourselves

leave to think how great your guilt and destruction is, and how terrible your misery and danger? And do you never consider that it was in and by Jesus Christ, as the appointed sacrifice for our sins, that God made his first steps towards you in a way of restoration and recovery? This should not be utterly neglected and forgotten by sinners. See how early was the love of God to fallen man.

3. It was in this view of Jesus Christ, as a propitiatory sacrifice, *that God instituted sacrifices to be offered up by Adam, immediately after his fall*, as it is recorded by Moses. God forbid that ever we should imagine, that the great God left this important affair of offering sacrifices to reconcile and appease an angry God, to the mere invention of vain and foolish man? And how can we suppose that it should enter into the heart of man, that God should be pleased with such sacrifices as the cutting and burning of his living creatures in the fire, in order to please him after their first sin?

It is very evident that God appointed the skins of beasts to be their first covering, but these very beasts were not then appointed by God the creator to be slain for the food of man, till the days of Noah: and therefore, it must be out of the beasts slain for sacrifice, *that the Lord God made coats of skins*, and clothed Adam, and his wife Eve. And it is highly probable that their clothing was made
out

out of the skins of the beasts that were sacrificed, to guard them from the cold winds, and storms, and from any of the inconveniencies of the air and sky that might befall them, for want of such covering. Gen. iii. 21. ‘And unto Adam and his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.’

It is further evident, that these sacrifices were not merely sacrifices of thanksgiving and acknowledgment to God for his mercies, as men are too often ready to suppose. When Cain brought to God the first fruits of the ground, Gen. iv. 3. if it was done merely as an offering of thankfulness, it is manifest that Abel also, Gen. v. 4. ‘brought of the firstlings of his flock, and the fat thereof;’ and it is very plain that Abel found acceptance with God, but Cain did not, ver. 5. And as it is repeated, Heb. xi. 4. ‘By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.’ And probably this was the difference, because by the sacrifice and death of the living creatures, there was an acknowledgment made of sin, and of sinful man’s desert of death, by some intimation from heaven; and this was accepted of God as an atonement or substitute, in the room of the sinner, or a typical propitiation for sin. This seems to be implied in that question of Balak to Balaam, Micah vi. 6. ‘Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most

‘ high God? Shall I come before him with
 ‘ burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old?
 ‘ Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of
 ‘ rams? &c. Or shall I give my first-born for
 ‘ my transgression, the fruit of my body for
 ‘ the sin of my soul?’ It is very natural for
 man, under a sense of the guilt of sin, to en-
 quire how he shall appear before a holy God
 with acceptance? And God, as it were in an-
 swer to such a supposed enquiry, directs Adam
 to the sacrifice of beasts, as an atonement for
 sin; *i. e.* as a sort of ransom for the forfeited
 life of man. And this is the most natural and
 most easy sense of things, and the best ac-
 count of the original of sacrifices, and of the
 prevalence and continuance of that custom
 almost all over the world: And this is the
 fairest account of the original tradition of
 Adam’s first sacrifice after his fall from God,
 and the sense of his anger.*

4. It

* As it is generally supposed by our divines, that it
 was Jesus the Son of God, who, in the name of his
 Father, appeared to Adam in the garden after his sin,
 and had this conversation with him, so it is not unlikely
 that God, in the person of his Son Jesus, taught Adam
 how to manage these sacrifices, by taking off the skins,
 and cutting the beasts into proper parts, and burning
 them; of which there is a hint given in the Greek tran-
 slation of the Septuagint, Gen. iv. 7. which is not found
 in the Hebrew original at present, where God says to
 Cain, *If thou hast rightly offered, but hast not rightly divided
 the sacrifice, thou hast sinned.* And if this is supposed to
 be a true account of the matter, then Jesus Christ him-
 self, in a prelude to his incarnation, was the first
 High

4. It was in the view of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God, that *all the schemes of the Jewish sacrifices, all the slaughter and burnt-offerings of the animals, and the pourings-out and sprinklings of blood, and the washings with water in the Jewish sacrifices, were first appointed as figurative methods, to cleanse them from sinful defilements:* And the Lord Jesus Christ at last appeared, or was set forth hereby, as the great deliverer from the wrath of God, and as typified under all these figures and shadows, Heb. x. 1—12. ‘The law having a shadow of good things to come, but not the very image of the things,’ those sacrifices were all imperfect as to the grand design; for they could not cleanse the consciences of men from guilt before God, Heb. x. 1, 2. In this respect Christ alone was the true sacrifice, Heb. ix. 11, 12.

And this was the reason of shedding of the blood of beasts according to the law, Heb. ix. 14, 15, 22. *For there was no remission without blood.* The blood of Christ, by virtue of his union with the true God, had infinite and immortal value in it. Christ, the Lamb of God, *offered himself without spot unto*

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God

High Priest, and he that taught Adam first to offer a sacrifice, and so, in the sight of God, it was accepted from the hands of him whom God had constituted an everlasting High Priest; though, at the same time, the sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God, might be typified by the slaughter and sacrifice of the beast itself.

God, to purge our consciences from dead works, or from works that deserve death, that we might serve the living and true God with acceptance: Thus Israel, considered as a national church, derived this advantage from our Lord Jesus Christ.

And it was with this view that the national atonement, or the bullock that was offered every year for the sins of the whole nation, Lev. xvith and xviith chapters, attained its proper effect, and delivered the whole nation from national guilt, and that destruction which the justice of God might have brought upon it for sin.

5. It was in the view of this great sacrifice, slain from the foundation of the world, *that God pardoned* the personal guilt of men, and forgave *thousands of sins under the Old Testament*, and spared the guilty, each of them in their day and season, and took away the guilt of their iniquities. So David was forgiven his adultery and his murder, crimes of the deepest dye, for which David knew of no sacrifice, Psal. li. 16. and for which no man could be pardoned or justified by any ceremonies in the law of Moses: And therefore the apostle says, *By this man*, even *Jesus Christ*, there was *forgiveness* appointed for those sins for which no sacrifices were ordered by the law of Moses, nor any sacrifices were offered, or accepted, according to the levitical law. Acts xiii. 38, 39. Rom. iii.

24, 25. 'God has set him forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God*.' But even at that time there was forgiveness with God in the view of Christ; for even David speaks with much freedom in the 32d Psalm, and elsewhere of the pardon of sin.

It was also through this blood of the Lamb slain, that Solomon was pardoned his many heinous and grievous sins; *i. e.* the Lamb of God slain in the view of the Father, as an atoning sacrifice from the foundation of the world: And through the same blood God forgave the repeated crimes of Manasseh the king, who had filled Jerusalem with slaughter; and all the saints, and all the kings, who had ever been sinners, and were saved, it was in this view of the blood of the Lamb; always supposing trust in the mercy of God, together with sincere repentance, and return to God, was found with the sinner at the same time. Blessed Jesus, how early and how extensive was this salvation through thy blood, even before it was actually offered!

6 *The*

* We translate this word *forgiveness*, as though it were Ἀφαισις, *remission*, but the word is ἀπασις, which properly signifies the *passing by of sin*; that is, that God did not then actually punish them: Though the Cocceian writers do not make a just inference from this, that therefore no sins were pardoned under the Old Testament, but merely the punishment of them delayed or neglected.

6. *The gospel of the salvation of sinful man was contrived and appointed by the great God, in this view of Jesus the Lamb of God, the great expiatory sacrifice, slain from the foundation of the world:* And it is for this reason that the doctrine of this atonement for sin by sacrifice, runs through all the parts and forms of religion, which God early appointed in the world, and the several religions which man, under the divine appointment of God, ever practised, Heb. x. 11, 12. Where there is a particular account given of the covenant of grace, from the language of the prophets. ‘ This man, after he had offered one sacrifice ‘ for sin, for ever sat down on the right hand ‘ of God; for by one offering, he hath for ‘ ever perfected them that are sanctified; ‘ whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness ‘ to us: For when he had said, This is the ‘ covenant I will make with them after those ‘ days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws ‘ in their hearts, and in their minds will I ‘ write them; and their sins and iniquities ‘ will I remember no more. Now where re- ‘ mission of these is, there is no more offering ‘ for sin.’ These are the blessings of the gos- pel of Christ; here is the sanctifying Spirit included, as well as the blood of atonement; here is a purification of our natures, as well as justification of our persons, introduced in the view of this Lamb that was slain: And therefore John the Baptist might say, in
more

more senses than one, John i. 29. ‘Behold
‘the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins
‘of the world.’ He takes away the guilt of
sin by his atoning sacrifice, and the power of
sin in the soul, by the sanctification of his
Spirit. All the blessed promises of the gospel,
in the Old Testament and in the New, are
but the language of this new covenant, which
arose from the view and foresight of the blood
of this dying Lamb; which was therefore
called *the blood of the everlasting covenant*,
Heb. xiii. 10.

Let me ask ye now, O sinners, whose con-
sciences are exposed to agonies through the
guilt of sin, and whose souls are in danger
of being captivated into new offences, by the
power of sin within you: Do you not see
how necessary these blessings are to your sal-
vation? How can you have your sins par-
doned, or your souls accepted with God unto
eternal life, or renewed unto holiness, if you
have not an interest in the salvation, wrought
by this blood of the Lamb? .

7. It was with this design, and in the view
of this blood of Jesus, the great sacrifice, that
all the ordinances of the New Testament itself
were instituted: Baptism itself had something
of this signification; for so said Ananias the
Christian to Paul, when he was first struck
down to the ground by the vision from
heaven, ‘Why tarriest thou? Arise, and be
‘baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling
‘on

‘ on the name of the Lord Jesus,’ Acts xxii. 16. The water of *baptism* came to have a cleansing and sanctifying virtue from the foresight and eternal mercy of God, who appointed Jesus Christ to be slain for a sacrifice; which is also intimated Heb. x. 21. ‘ Let us
 ‘ draw near with a true heart, in full assurance
 ‘ of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an
 ‘ evil conscience, and our bodies washed,’ *i. e.* in baptism, ‘ with pure water.’

There is no need of the particular description of the institution of the *Lord’s supper*, Matt. xxvi. 28. Rev. i. 5. wherein the blood of Jesus Christ is said to wash us from our sins. *The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all unrighteousness*, 1 John i. 7.

8. It was in the view of this Lamb slain from the foundation of the world *that there was a way made, provided, and prepared, for our Lord Jesus Christ to arise from the dead.* The apostle to the Hebrews, in chap. xiii. ver. 10. is express in this sentiment. ‘ The
 ‘ God of peace, who brought again from the
 ‘ dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of
 ‘ the sheep, through the blood of the everlast-
 ‘ ing covenant:’ *i. e.* The covenant of grace and pardon, which began as soon as man had sinned, and remains to this day, even to all everlasting, to speak peace and pardon to sinners. Every circumstance in this part of the history of our Saviour was appointed in this view. He died, and lay in the grave for a
 short

short season, to prove the truth and reality of his death, and he arose again, to confirm the predictions of the ancient prophets, for all the works of God, concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, and his transactions in life and in death, *were known to him from the beginning of the world*; and every step of his sufferings, and his rising from the grave, was all ordained with a view to this blood of the covenant, by which he was raised from the dead, Acts xi. 18. All the decrees of God, and all the predictions of the prophets, all the types of the old Jewish law, and all the promises of God with regard to his Son Jesus, were doubtless appointed, accomplished, and fulfilled, with a regard to this great sacrifice.

The holy angels, who were to be employed in the resurrection and ascension of Christ, were doubtless acquainted with this glorious event before-hand; every one of those holy ones had their orders to be ready at the proper post for these transactions; for his rising from the dead, and his glorious entrance, as the Son of God, into his heavenly kingdom; *thousands of angels* were present there. Psal. lxxviii. 17. ‘The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive,’ &c. in ver. 17, 18.

9. Therefore

9. Therefore was our Lord Jesus Christ represented to the apostle John, as a *Lamb slain in the midst of the throne*, after his resurrection, and his entrance into glory in heaven, Rev. v. 6. *That there might be an everlasting emblem, and monument, or memorial, of the Lamb slain before the face of God, for all the blessed designs which God had in his view for the salvation of his people, through all the ages of mankind, ever since sin entered into the world, even to the end of time, and the consummation of all things:* That by this vision there might be before the eyes of God a perpetual appearance of this foundation of our pardon of sin, the justification of our persons through the blood of Christ, and our acceptance with God in the heavenly world. And who can tell, or who can conceive, how many and how various were the blessed and glorious ends that God designed, and actually attained, by this representation?

DISCOURSE VI.

ON

REVELATIONS xiii. 8.

The Second Part of this SERMON.

Rev. xiii. 8. and v. 6.

—*Of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. In the midst of the throne—stood a Lamb as it had been slain.*

THUS far have we considered what are the transactions of God, in which he might have a regard to the sacrifice of Christ, represented so early as before the foundation of the world.

In the *next* place, I proceed to consider *what divine lessons of instruction, or consolation, may be derived from this vision of the Lamb, as it had been slain, appearing in the midst of the throne, Rev. v. 6.* And among these we may number such as follow.

1st Lesson.

1st Lesson. There is hereby an information given to the inhabitants of the heavenly world, that *Jefus, the Son of God, who was made man, has redeemed many from among the children of men, to be a praise unto him, and his glory, in all ages to come.* There is an enquiry, Rev. vii. 13. ‘What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?’ To this we may answer, as in that text, ver. 14. ‘These are they who came out of great tribulation.’ Or we may give the same answer as Zeba and Zalmunna answered to Gideon, when they were asked, ‘What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor?’ And they answered, ‘As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king.’ And he said, ‘They were my brethren, even the sons of my mother.’ Each of them are the brethren of our Lord Jesus Christ, born of women, and exposed to great tribulations; but they have all ‘washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’ And therefore they are like the angels of heaven, who stand round the throne, in the glorious services for which they are prepared, in the court of our blessed Redeemer, each of them the image of the first born Son of God, and reconciled to God the Father by his blood, and shall dwell there for ever with him. A glorious reconciler, and a divine
atonement,

atonement, and happy souls who are partakers of it?

2d *Lesson.* The Lamb, as it had been slain, appears there as a divine Mediator, and is a *memorial of the everlasting virtue, and constant efficacy, of the atoning sacrifice of Christ*; which was typified of old by the constant sacrifices morning and evening: The *priests* on earth stood daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices; which could never *effectually* take away sin: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God: For by one offering he has for ever perfected them that are sanctified,' Heb. x. 11, 12, 14. These repeated sacrifices, were designed as a type to remove the continual guilt of returning sins amongst the saints; morning-sins, and evening-sins, sins in the beginning of life, sins in the middle state of life, and sins of old age; sins of public life, and private sins, known and unknown, secret and public. The priests were daily employed in continuing these typical sacrifices, through all the Levitical dispensation. And let it be observed, Acts iii. 1. this was called the *hour of prayer*; and that the people were appointed to offer their prayers and praises unto God at these times of the morning and evening sacrifice, as the everlasting means of the acceptance of our morning and evening worship before God, making all our services

H

acceptable

acceptable to the great and blessed God in heaven hereby.

Therefore when we come to lift up our morning worship, or our evening addresses, to the throne, let us remember that Jesus, the Lamb who was slain, is there for ever, making this *new and living way to the throne* plain, and keeping it always open by the virtue of his sacrifice. Let not a morning or evening pass without an address to heaven in this blood.

3d Lesson. This gives sufficient and perpetual notice of the everlasting intercession which Christ makes for the saints, Heb. vii. 25. And therefore he is represented as able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by him. There is no need of other high priests to offer up daily sacrifices, since the one sacrifice of Jesus, the great High Priest, in the constant emblem of it, abides here before the face of God for ever. John i. 29. Behold the Lamb of God, who, by his blood, cleanseth us from all sin. Though our sins may be as scarlet, Isa. i. 18. they shall all be washed away; and our garments be as white as snow, or made white as wool, and fit to appear before God continually, without blemishes and defilement, through this abounding fountain, which may be said to flow for ever from the wounds of Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice; since it is in and by this blood, our High Priest may be supposed for ever to plead with the
Father

Father for our pardon and acceptance: For the intercession of Christ is scarcely revealed unto us as carried on by the actual voice or language of Jesus the Son of God in heaven; but perhaps it rather means the everlasting virtue and efficacy of his sacrifice, as his blood, which has a voice in it, even as a *fountain, always open and flowing* in the sight of God, for the *forgiveness of sins*, Zech. xiii. 1. for all the true Israel of God: And in this sense, the blood of Jesus, as is elsewhere said concerning the blood of Abel, it has *a voice in it, and pleads for ever for better things than the blood of Abel did*, Heb. xii. 24. Glory be to God for providing this everlasting sacrifice, and for revealing such a vision in the midst of the throne, for our constant contemplation.

4th *Lesson*. This vision appears on the throne as *an everlasting encouragement for the vilest and most guilty sinners of all ages to trust in the sacrifice of the Lamb that was slain*. When we remember the scarlet and crimson sins of David, Solomon, and Manasseh, and of the Corinthians, which are reckoned up, 1 Cor. vi. 10, 11. the saints on earth may say, *And such were we*, drenched all over and defiled with iniquities, whose evil thoughts, evil words, and evil actions, are without bounds, and without number; *but they are all washed away* in this divine laver, with all the infinite evil and guilt of them, against

the majesty and the grace of God; for the virtue and the dignity of the united Godhead, which dwells in the man Christ Jesus, runs through the whole of his sacrifice, and makes it of infinite and everlasting value; whereby sins of all manner of aggravations are removed from those that believe in Jesus, 1 John i. 7. Matt. xii. 31. No manner of crimes are sufficient to create despair, where this atonement is provided.

5th Lesson. It may also be designed as an *encouraging memorial to relieve old sinners under the guilt of sins, of long continuance, and laden with many aggravations*; for as the yearly sacrifice of atonement, whose blood the high-priest carried into the holy place, and appeared there before God, cancelled the guilt of all the nation for all the days of that year; so Christ, being entered into the holy place, made without hands, and dwelling there for ever, with his own blood, answers for the sins of those that believe in him, which they have been all their lives committing against God, if they are but deeply convinced of their long and repeated iniquities, and with humble faith fly to Jesus, the hope that is set before them.

Look up, therefore, look up, ye humble penitents, that have been guilty of many and repeated crimes, and are almost drowned in tears of repentance, and are ready to die under despair, because of your aggravated iniquities,

iniquities, look unto this blessed emblem on high, the Lamb, as it had been slain: This sacrifice gives foundation for hope, not only that we shall be cleansed from all our secret faults, which are more than we can think, or reckon up, but even from presumptuous sins, which are of the deepest dye. Matt. xii. 31. 'All manner of sins and blasphemies,' says our Saviour, 'shall be forgiven unto men.' Look up to this blessed emblem, and you shall find this salvation complete and perfect, and your consciences pacified, under the agonies of your own guilty reflections, through the blood of Jesus, who died.

6th *Lesson.* This emblem of a dying sacrifice is also *a refuge, a support, and a hope for saints, under the continual workings of original sin, under their daily infirmities, under every new temptation, and the buffetings and charges of Satan, who is the accuser of the brethren,* Rev. xii. 11. The armies of the saints have continually experienced the virtue of this sacrifice; for in all ages *they cast down this accuser by the blood of the Lamb;* and here is their great refuge, under all the violent and repeated suggestions and accusations of the great enemy of God and souls: Here is indeed a sweet pillow for the souls of those who have been guilty of long iniquities, to rest their penitent and pained consciences, by faith upon, in a dying hour. Heb. xiii. 8. *Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for*

ever. And the virtue of his atonement always fresh in the eye of God.

Is there any poor soul here, whose conscience is buffeted and sorely tormented with hurrying temptations, and doubts whether their repeated sins shall be pardoned or no? Go into the secret chambers of retirement and repentance, whither the saints before you have gone, and sighed, and wept bitterly before God, and mourned over their sins before the throne. Ask Christians of long experience, whence came all their peace, and their hopes of freedom from the guilt of sin? And they will answer with one voice, It is from the blood of the Lamb. It would overwhelm the conscience to have a full sight of these transgressions let in upon it, in all their terror and their dreadful condemnation, if they had not such a refuge as this to fly to. O blessed for ever be the name of Jesus, who has given us, in his word, such a sight, such a gracious vision of hope and comfort! And a blessed vision it is, for the poor humble sinner to take a look at daily, with an eye of faith.

7th Lesson. This vision is appointed as *an evidence and monument of the church's safety and security, hope and confidence, even to the end of the world; though their circumstances be never so low, though they are never so much sinking under their fears, this is a good security of that promise, Matth. xvi. 18. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church's*

church's interest, to bring it down to the ground; for the sacrifice of Christ is of everlasting value, and has purchased the security of the church to the end of the world. Jesus is represented as standing in the midst of the throne, and before the eyes of God the Father; so that the church shall never be condemned, nor given up to destruction. All the living stones that God has designed to be brought into the building of the church, shall be brought into it in their several seasons: All the dead sinners, that are made alive by the blood of Christ, and by the work of his Holy Spirit, shall be raised together in a glorious building, which God shall dwell in for ever: *And when the top-stone is laid in heaven, the redeemed nations shall shout unto it, Grace, grace, Zech. iv. 7.*

8th *Lesson.* This vision may be esteemed also as a *monumental emblem, that the followers of Christ, who shall fill heaven with inhabitants, are sinners redeemed from the earth:* They are brought into heaven as ransomed by the blood of the Lamb, and as cleansed in this laver; they are not originally pure and holy in themselves, as the angels were, but they are guilty creatures, once shamefully defiled and corrupted, but rescued from hell and sin, and recovered from all their defilements and dangers by a blessed Redeemer. Such were some of you, all ye pardoned and sanctified souls; such were all of you, as related to the first

Adam, sinful and miserable; but ye are redeemed and saved by the second. This thought should ever keep us humble and self-abased, that such worthless creatures as we are, are not banished for ever from the presence of God. This should ever put us in mind of our low estate, that we were once fallen creatures, and are raised by the sovereign and condescending grace of God in Christ Jesus; and it is in Christ alone that we stand.

This should be a perpetual warning to each of us, not to indulge or endure the least defilement of sin; for sin is of so malignant a nature, that it will soon spread all over the soul, and taint it with guilt and shame, when once indulged. This is a lesson for redeemed creatures ever to remember, especially while we are within the reach of temptation, and should keep us ever watchful.

9th *Lesson.* This vision may give the believers in *Christ an everlasting assurance that they shall never be separated from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord:* For he stands in the midst of the throne, and will keep his place there for ever and ever, Rom. viii. 34, 35. He stands there, if I may so speak, in his priestly garments, with the remembrance of his bloody sacrifice, before the throne of God, and is never out of his sight. Faith may triumph with holy confidence in this view. *Who shall condemn us*
now,

now, since Christ has died, and lives for ever, to maintain and testify this atonement, which he has made for our sins by his death, and his rising again? He that was dead is alive, and lives for evermore. Amen, Rev. i. 18. Who shall pretend therefore to separate us from the love of God, that is so secured to us in and by Jesus Christ? You see plainly, in the last verse of this chapter, faith defies all creatures whatsoever to make any division between God and the justified and holy soul, while Jesus appears there in the eternal remembrance of his atoning sacrifice: The poor creature here on earth may sometimes be overtaken with sin, through the power of corruption, and blush, and fear to think of appearing before a God of perfect holiness; but this vision of our Redeemer encourages his faith, restores his spirit, and supports his hope. And we may observe it is placed in the last of the prophetic visions, even in the Revelations of St. John, that it may abide upon the soul, and live in the memory of saints, in this frail and imperfect state, where they are so often in danger of sinning against God.

INFERENCES or REMARKS *drawn from these Discourses.*

I. Rem. *How large, how excellent, and how glorious is this salvation of Jesus Christ,*
the

the Lamb of God, slain to take away the sins of the world? And this may be made to appear in many particulars.

1st *Instance of the extent of it.* *It is a salvation that reaches through all ages, from the beginning to the end of time, from the first sin of man, even to the end of all things: Those glories of the salvation of Jesus Christ are beyond the reach of our present conception, and beyond all the powers of number to reckon up, and the force of eloquence to display.*

2d *Instance of the extent of it.* *It reaches through all the tribes of mankind, through all countries and nations, through all families and persons, both Jew and Gentile, to the ends of the earth. Our Saviour prophesies, That if he be lifted up from the earth, that is, crucified, and die as an atoning sacrifice, he shall draw all men unto him, John xii. 32. So in Rev. v. 10. and vii. 9. Men of all nations, and of all languages, of all countries and all ages, shall be found in this blessed number, who are redeemed by the blood of Christ, and join in the everlasting song of praise to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever.*

3d *Instance of the extent of it.* *This doctrine of the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, reaches through all the transactions of God with the children of men: It begins as high as creation itself,*
thousands

thousands of mankind were at first created for this reason, that they might in time be joined to this blessed army, and rejoice and triumph in the Lamb that was slain: It reaches through all the redemption of Christ, for sinful men were redeemed by the blood of Christ for this very purpose: For this purpose they were called and converted from the wicked of the earth; and turned from sin to God, that they might for ever be made glorious in holiness. It is through this death of Christ, the Son of God, that they are all justified and brought into the divine favour: They are all sanctified by his Holy Spirit, under this influence, and adopted into the family of God, to become the younger brethren of Jesus, the First-begotten of the Father: And when God fulfils this salvation in heaven, it will appear what multitudes of fallen ruined creatures are recovered and saved, by this atonement of the Lamb.

4th *Instance of the extent of it.* I may add further, *All the mercies and blessings that are bestowed upon men through time and eternity:* I might add, *Whether these blessings are national or personal,* yet our Lord Jesus Christ, in our nature, dying on the cross, has some hand, by the exuberant merit of his sacrifice, in procuring and accomplishing all these purposes: The grace of Christ, while we keep our eye on the united Godhead, has some hand in all the temporal favours, and even the

the national mercies, even of those who refuse to receive the special and everlasting blessings of his grace; besides all the consolations and the joys which the saints are partakers of here on earth, from their first calling to their glorification, must have some regard to this great sacrifice, ever fresh in the eye of God.

5th *Instance of the extent of it.* This salvation spreads through and beyond all *the sins that ever we committed, from the beginning of life to this day*; and beyond even *all the miseries that mankind ever sustained by their original fall, and apostacy from God; had they all received this grace, it is enough to balance them all.* In the dignity of the divine nature, united to the man Jesus, there is provision enough to answer for all this abounding iniquity, and price sufficient to buy all the blessings that God ever bestowed upon his fallen creature man, and sufficient pardon and happiness for all the sinners that are willing to submit to the grace of God, and receive these blessings in his own appointed way. It is only impenitence, and rejection of the gospel, hinders the universal effect of it. O amazing and blessed extent of this salvation!

6th *Instance of the extent of it.* I add, in the last place, the doctrine of the salvation of the Lamb of God, slain from the beginning of the world, *carries a glory through all the*
perfections

perfections and attributes of God himself, which might be discovered at large in a survey of the several glories of his nature, his justice, and wisdom, his power and his truth, his grace and goodness, in the salvation of fallen men: There is never a perfection of God that is honoured, but it is in and by this blessed medium, the death and mediation of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

II. Rem. *How necessary, how solid, and important, is this doctrine of the salvation of Christ, by the atonement of the Lamb? It is not a mere matter of speculation, amusement, and discourse, but it is of infinite concernment to men to be acquainted with it, John xii. 27. For the purposes and designs of this hour, even of the atonement and death of Christ, the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, came into this world: This might be illustrated also in many particulars; as*

I. *Illustration of this Remark. God would not deal thus with his beloved Son Jesus Christ, to make him a bloody sacrifice, for mean and ignoble purposes: This work of his death and atonement is by no means to be esteemed as a cypher among the works of divine grace, or as a mere object of speculation and amusement: The blessed God has too much love for his Son Jesus, his only begotten, and his first-beloved, to make him merely the talk of his church, or the matter of entertainment*
for

for their meditation, or their discourse; there must be something substantial, holy, divine, and honourable, designed in and by the death of this Lamb of God; whose sacrifice, in the view of it, is represented as beginning before the foundation of the world.

2d *Illustration of this Remark.* *God would not deal thus with the fallen and miserable race of mankind, to appoint such a sacrifice, which had little or no efficacy in it.* Our Saviour himself tells us, John vi. 33, 35. *That he is the bread of life; and except we eat his flesh, and drink his blood, except the fallen and perishing race of mankind apply themselves to this way of salvation by Jesus Christ, they have no life in them; that is, there is no salvation appointed any other way, Acts v. 12.*

3d *Illustration of this Remark.* *The blessed God would not deal thus with his chief favourites among mankind, even the wisest, the best, and the holiest of his creatures, to appoint his Son to be a sacrifice merely to entertain their reasonings and their meditations; but it is designed as the food of their souls, as the life of their spirits, and their hope for eternity, John vi. 21.*

4th *Illustration of this Remark.* *Again, God would never have dealt thus with his chosen and favourite people the Jews, through all their generations, to have fed them and pleased them only with types and figures, shadows and emblems, if they had no substantial blessings*

blessings contained in them: There were indeed some happy uses appointed concerning these types and shadows, in the national church of the Jews, but this was not the chief design of their institution, but it was to figure out and represent the solid blessings of the gospel, the spiritual and everlasting privileges which God designed for all his chosen and saved ones.

5th *Illustration of this Remark.* I might add, in the last place, *God would not deal thus with his holy prophets of the Old Testament, and his apostles in the New, whether Jews or Christians, to make them the ministers of a shewy and shadowy dispensation, which had no substantial and everlasting blessings belonging to it.*

III. Rem. *What a divine and distinguishing blessing is it to us, in this age and this nation, that the doctrine of the pardon of sin, by the atoning blood of the Lamb, has been preached to us from our infancy, and yet continues to be preached to us by the ministers of the gospel?* O blessed be God, that we are not found in those Popish nations, where the priests would teach us to trust in masses and penances, in long and idle repetitions of formal prayers in Latin, and merits of the saints, and useless addresses to them, represented in figures of silver or gold, wood or stone, or brass, in order to reconcile us to God; in sprinklings with
with

with holy water, and other fooleries, instead of the only appointed sacrifice of the Son of God; whereby they make void the blessed gospel of Christ, and overwhelm it with their superstitious inventions? How sad a thing would it be for us, if we were left upon a dying pillow, and had no other hopes but these to rest our souls upon?

Here it may not be improper to give an answer to this *objection*: If this doctrine of the atoning blood of the Lamb that was slain be so glorious in itself, and so needful to our salvation, *How comes it to pass that our Saviour speaks so little of it in the whole of his ministry, while he was three years preaching amongst the towns of the Jews?*

Answer. See a large and full answer to this objection in my Sermon on the *Atonement of Christ*. Vol. II. And further answers are repeated in my Treatise of *Orthodoxy and Charity united*, in the three last pages of the *first Essay of the Substance and Matter of the Gospel*.

Another *objection* may be raised here: If this doctrine be so glorious, and so very needful, *How comes it to pass, that it is so much neglected among men that profess Christianity? And that men who believe it, are no more affected with it?*

Answer 1. Though a thing be never so useful and necessary, yet the *mere commonness of these things sometimes is an unhappy occasion*
of

of rendering them less regarded, and less attended to. These glories and wonders of the gospel of Christ have run over our thoughts and over our tongues so many thousand times, without that due solemnity as becomes them, and without those awful ideas which those things require, that our natures are not much moved by the importance of them. Though these truths are in themselves so divine, so awful, and solemn, yet, alas! they are lost upon our passions, and they make no powerful impression there; they awaken no serious meditations, neither at the time present nor afterwards.

Answer 2. *Mankind do not keep upon their minds a deep sense of sin;* the impressions that the convincing Spirit sometimes makes, vanish away from their consciences, and the necessity and the glory of this way of salvation too soon vanishes off from our thoughts, because we are not rightly and steadily apprehensive what an infinite evil is contained in the nature of sin; and therefore the methods of pardoning mercy and forgiving grace lie with so little weight upon our spirits. The sacrifice of Christ, how exceeding precious soever it is to an awakened and convinced sinner, yet it little affects the meditations of those who have not a lively sense of sin maintained upon their spirits: When sin lies with a weight upon the soul, it awakens many a bitter sigh and groan; and a review

of the method of atonement appointed by the great God, in the blood of Christ, renders the remembrance of it very pleasant and affecting. Let us therefore endeavour with all diligence to preserve a deep sense of the evil of sin, as committed against the infinite Majesty of heaven, always upon our consciences, that the blood of Jesus may be ever precious unto us: We soon forget the vile aggravations with which our sins are attended; and therefore, the way of forgiveness makes so little impression upon our souls.

Answer 3. There are few *Christians who keep the love of Christ active and warm enough in their hearts, to give them any deep impressions of the invaluable price of his blood.* It is true, there are many thousands in our land and nation who love the Lord Jesus Christ sincerely, though they have not seen him; but still they are but few, in comparison of the unknown multitudes who have heard of his name, and yet know him not, and love him not: O blessed Jesus, awaken these thousands of stupid sinners to see the wonders of thy love, the amazing condescension of thy death, and the glory of this thy salvation. This reconciliation to God by the blood of Christ is one of the chief glories for which the saints in heaven ever praise him, and ever love him: This is the matter of their divine songs, *Worthy is the Lamb to receive glory and honour;* because we were enslaved and captivated to

fin and Satan, and we are redeemed by his blood, Rev. v. 6.

Answer 4. Another unhappy cause why these things make so slight an impression upon our spirits, is, because the *most of us are so busily and deeply engaged in the things of this present life*; though all these things, which affect our present passions, are but shadows and trifles, in comparison of this glorious and divine doctrine: A glorious subject indeed, which should at all times awaken our warmest joy, and our loudest praises.

IV. Rem. *How divinely full of glory and pleasure shall that happy hour be, when all the millions of mankind, that have been redeemed by the blood of this Lamb of God, shall meet together, and stand around him, with every tongue and every heart full of joy and praise!* How astonishing will be the glory and the joy of that day, when all the saints shall join together in one common song of gratitude, and love, and everlasting thankfulness, to this Redeemer? With what unknown delight, and inexpressible satisfaction, shall all that are saved from the ruins of sin and hell, address the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world, and rejoice in his presence?

Nor shall the angels be silent in this general and universal song of blessing and praise; for though they are not redeemed from sin

and hell by this blood of the Lamb, yet they are represented in Rev. v. 11, 12, 13. as assisting the saints, the redeemed of the Lord, in their triumphs of universal joy: And when they shall all at once, who, in the several ages of the world, have been taught to receive the grace and salvation of this Redeemer, stand together, and praise the Father of all things, who has given their souls into the hands of his Son Jesus Christ, to redeem, sanctify, and save them! Then God shall have fulfilled this blessed prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ, John xvii. 24. *Father, I will, that those whom thou hast given me should be with me where I am, to behold my glory.*

DISCOURSE VII.

God in Christ is the Saviour of the
Ends of the Earth :

O R,

Faith represented in its lowest Degrees.

The First Part of this SERMON.

Isa. xlv. 22.

*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends
of the earth; for I am God, and there is
none else.*

IF these words were not written in the Bible, and by that means grown old and familiar to us, but if they had come immediately into the midst of any assembly in Great Britain, by a voice from heaven, How would they awaken our ears, and

imprefs our souls! Surely every one amongst us, that fees himself in danger of perishing, would listen with eager attention to the word that calls and invites him to be saved. The British Islands have been reckoned by the ancients to be the ends of the earth; and we, the inhabitants thereof, should be strangely surprized and pleased at such language from the upper world.

Our thoughts would be crowded with hasty *enquiries*, “ Whence is this blessed
 “ voice? Is it from heaven indeed? Who is
 “ it that invites perishing wretches to salva-
 “ tion? Am not I within the reach and
 “ compass of this call? Is it not I that am
 “ invited? And is not the blessing suited to
 “ my case and my danger? What must I
 “ do to partake of it? And what assurance
 “ can I have that it shall be conferred upon
 “ me?”

Such *enquiries* as these should be raised in us at this time, if we do but pay as just a deference to the voice of God when he spoke *of old by a prophet*, as we would if he spake *now by a sudden miracle*: And though all these *queries* would be very hard to answer, if we had nothing else but this miraculous sound, yet as the words lie in the Old Testament, since we enjoy the New, it is much easier to obtain a satisfying answer to them. Let us then try to find out,

I. Who

- I. *Who is the person that speaks.*
- II. *Who are the persons spoken to.*
- III. *What this salvation is.*
- IV. *How we are to come by it.*
- V. *What assurance we can have that we shall possess it in the way proposed.*

To answer these questions shall be the business of these Discourses.

First, Let us find out *Who is the person that speaks.*

He asserts his own divinity in the words of my text. *I am God, and there is none else.* Whether the Divine Being speaks this in the person of the *Father*, or in the person of *Jesus Christ the Son*, is not of absolute necessity to be determined in this place.

Perhaps it could not be expounded under the Old Testament any otherwise than concerning the great God, considered as the *Father of all*, the only true God, whose name is *Jehovah*, and who was then chiefly known to the Jews as the *God of Israel*. It is the God of the Jews calling the Gentiles to partake of his salvation. He is their *strength* and their *Saviour*, and *their righteousness is derived from him*, as in the foregoing and following verses.

But when under the New Testament we explain these words, we must rather consider *God in Christ reconciling the world of Jews*

and Gentiles to himself: It is the same one Godhead which dwells bodily in the man Christ Jesus; for the Father and the Son are not two Gods. It is God, the only true God, manifest in the flesh: It is Emmanuel, or God with us, who speaks these words: It is Christ Jesus the Lord, who is one with the Father, and in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells, who calls the ends of the earth to look unto him and be saved. And there are some special reasons that incline me to suppose these words of the prophet should chiefly be applied in the New Testament to our Lord Jesus Christ, who makes this blessed offer of grace.

(1.) It is the same person to whom the salvation of Israel is ascribed, and who is called a Saviour so often in the context, ver. 15. 17, 21. which is the very meaning of the name Jesus, and the frequent appellation of Christ in the New Testament, and his particular office is to be a Saviour, and to bring salvation.

(2.) It is he who is appointed to be the righteousness and the strength of his people. Ver. 24, 25. 'Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified.' Now this is the very name of the Messiah, Jer. xxiii. 6. 'The Lord our righteousness:' And it is Christ who is made righteousness unto us, 1 Cor. i. 30. And by
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and in whom all the saints are to be justified in the language of the gospel. It is from him also that his people derive strength. St. Paul bids Timothy be 'strong in the grace which 'is in Christ,' 2 Tim. ii. 1. The Ephesian converts must 'be strong in the Lord,' Eph. vi. 10. And the apostle himself could 'do all 'things through Christ, who strengthened 'him,' Phil. iv. 13. Now the New Testament (to which times the words of my text chiefly refer,) does not usually represent God under the idea of the Father, as the *strength* of believers, nor is he ever described there as their *righteousness*.

Again, (3.) This is the person that brings *salvation to the ends of the earth*, which is the very character of the Messiah in the writings of the same prophet, Isa. xlix, 6. 'I will 'give thee for a light to the Gentiles,' (says God the Father,) 'that thou mayest be my 'salvation to the ends of the earth.'

(4.) I add further, that part of this context, even the very next words, are applied to our Lord Jesus Christ by St. Paul. The prophet saith, 'I am the Lord, and there is 'none else,' ver. 18. 'Unto me every knee 'shall bow, every tongue shall swear,' ver. 23. The apostle, citing the words of the prophet, speaks thus: Rom. xiv. 9, 10, 11. 'Christ 'died, and rose, that he might be Lord of 'the dead and the living: All must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ: For it is
' written,

‘ written, As I live, saith the Lord, every
 ‘ knee shall bow to me, and every tongue
 ‘ shall confess to God.’ Where the words
Christ, Lord, and God, seem to be used promiscuously for the same person. Nor would the apostle’s argument seem strong and cogent in that place, if the word *God* were applied only to the *Father*; for it is his design there to shew that the advancement and glory of Christ was the aim and the effect of our Saviour’s death and resurrection, that he might be *Lord* and Judge of all, and that *every knee and tongue* might own his Lordship and sovereignty. The application of these words to Christ is again evident in Phil. ii. 10, 11. ‘ At the name of Jesus every knee
 ‘ should bow, and every tongue confesses that
 ‘ Jesus is Lord.’ Though there the *glory of the Father* is expressed also.

(5.) The last reason why this text may be properly applied to Christ, is, because many other expressions of the prophets, that plainly belong to the great God, the God of Israel, as coming to bring salvation to the Gentiles, are plainly applied to Christ in the New Testament. Psal. cii. 22, 25. ‘ When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms,
 ‘ to serve the Lord, &c. Of old thou hast
 ‘ laid the foundations of the earth.’ This is applied to Christ, Heb. i. 10. So Psal. xcvii. 1, 7. ‘ The Lord reigns; let the multitude
 ‘ of isles be glad: Worship him all ye gods.’
 Which

Which is applied to Christ, Heb. i. 6. So Isa. xxxv. 4, 5, 6. compared with Mark ix. 27. So Isa. xl. 5. compared with Matt. iii. 3. So Joel v. 32. compared with Rom. x. 13. which would be too large now to rehearse.

It will be *objected* indeed, How can it be said, that Christ is *God, and there is none else?* Is not the *Father* God also?

I *answer*, This does no more exclude the Godhead of the Father, than our Saviour's own words, John xvii. 3. exclude his own divinity, where he calls the Father *The only true God*. I think it is sufficiently evident from many places of scripture, that the Father and the Son have an inconceivable communion, and that *one and the same divine nature*, which is in the Father, dwells in the Son: For since divine names and attributes, works and worship, are ascribed to both, therefore they must both be in some sense *true God*; and since there is but *one true God*, they must both have fellowship in the *same Godhead*; or else the Son would be *another God* different from the Father; which the Bible neither knows nor allows.

These words therefore, *I am God, and there is none else*, if applied to Christ, mean no more than this: There is no other *Godhead* but that which dwells in me; but that Godhead in which I partake, by intimate communion or oneness with the Father. 'I am in the Father, and the Father is in me,' John xiv.

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‘ In Christ dwells all the fulness of the God-
‘ head bodily,’ Col. ii. 9.

After all, if we should ascribe this speech entirely to God the Father, yet it must be confessed, as I hinted before, it is God in Christ, God *as reconciling the world to himself in and by Jesus Christ*, and saving the Gentiles as his people, with an *everlasting salvation?* so that Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of men, cannot be left out of my text.

The *second Enquiry* is this, *Who are the persons to whom this gracious invitation is made?*

The text tells us, that the call reaches to *all the ends of the earth*, which we are to understand in a *literal* or in a *figurative* sense.

It, *In a literal sense*, and thus it signifies the *Gentile nations*, who dwell afar off from Judea, those that inhabit the distant corners of the world, and the *islands that are afar off*, that have not heard of the fame of the grace or glory of God, as Isa. lxvi. 19. For the Jews fancied themselves to be placed in the middle of the earth, by the peculiar favour of God; and indeed they were so in one respect, for the land of Canaan is near the borders of Asia, where it joins to Africa, and not very far off from the limits of Europe; which three were the only known parts of the world in that day.

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The *British islands* may, in a special manner, be included in this expression, for they were the very *farthest parts of the earth* that could be known in the age of *Isaiah*. This voice of compassion is therefore eminently sent to us in *England*; the Lord says to every one of us, *Behold me, behold me, ye that were not called by my name*, *Isa. lxxv. 1. Look unto me from these isles afar off, Ye Britons, Look unto me from the ends of the earth, and be saved.* O Sirs, if you and I could but imagine that *Jesus Christ* calls us as it were by name, surely it would allure us to hearken to the voice of such divine compassion.

Illy, The words may be understood in a *figurative sense*, and so they may signify *all those persons who are under the same sort of character and circumstance as the Gentiles were in that age.*

1. Ye that are in the *ends of the earth*, that are afar off from the church of God, his knowledge and his worship. Ye that are at the greatest distance from the true *Jerusalem*. Ye who are the vilest of sinners, utterly unholly and *without God in the world*. Ye that have nothing of grace or religion in you, *Look unto Christ and be saved*; for he came to save the sinners of the *Gentiles*, and the vilest of mankind.

2. Ye that have *not known the blessing of holy parents*, but were bred like *Heathens, who know not God*, and born in families that
call

call not on his name: Ye that never were trained up in religious education, that were never brought near to God by a father that was in his covenant, or a mother that believed in his gospel: Ye that were never solemnly devoted to God, nor acknowledge any relation to him, he calls you this day to accept his salvation.

Or 3. Ye that have *broke the bonds of a pious education, and ran away from God and his house, and his worship,* as the Gentiles had done from the religion and instructions of Noah their ancestor: Ye that have wandered afar off from your Father's house, even *to the ends of the earth,* and are perishing with the *prodigal son,* at a dreadful distance from God and heaven: Come, *look unto Christ, and be saved.*

4. Ye that are *mourning in darkness,* as it were at *the ends of the earth,* and on the very borders of hell, *without hope,* as the Gentiles were, Eph. ii. 12. almost giving up all for lost, yielding to final despair, Look to Jesus the Saviour, lay hold on the hope that is set before you, and live.

And while I am preaching in this place*, I may add, also (Fifthly,) You that *dwell in dark corners of this our land, far from any place of religious worship:* Ye who live by the sides of the forest, or on bare and solitary commons, in a poor ignorant village, or in
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* This was delivered in a village in the country.

lonesome cottages, where letters and reading are not known, and a Bible is a strange thing, where books are seldom seen, and the word of God never founds: Ye that have lived hitherto like wild Heathens *in the ends of the earth*, if any such are present in this assembly: Remember you are this day called as it were by the prophet from heaven, and by the word of the living God, from the lips of his ministers on earth, to look to *God in Christ*, as reconciling the world to himself, to look to Jesus the Saviour, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells.

The *third Enquiry* proceeds thus: *What is this salvation to which we are invited?*

It is the same salvation that Israel shall enjoy, the *Israel of God*, the people of his love: They 'shall be saved in the Lord with an 'everlasting salvation,' ver. 17. In general, it is a salvation from sin, and all the dismal consequences of it. This is the reason of the name Jesus, or the Saviour, Matt. i. 21. 'He shall save his people from their sins.' And it is the same *Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come*, 1 Theff. i. 10.

Particularly, (1.) It is a salvation from the guilt of past sins, which exposes us to divine vengeance, and a restoration of the person to the present love and favour of God, to peace of conscience, and to *the hope of eternal life*.

(2.) It

(2.) It is a falvation and recovery from the power of fin to the power of holinefs. It is a deliverance from vile affections and finful praćices to the praćice and the love of all piety and goodnefs: It is a recovery of our nature from the lufts of the flefh, and the life of a brute, to the reasonable and becoming life of a man or an angel. It is a refcure of the foul from the tyranny of its own lufts, and the foul image of Satan, to a fweet and facred liberty, to a religious felf-government, and to the image of God.

(3.) It is a deliverance from all the future punifhments due to fin, from the everlafting misery of hell, together with the conveyance of a right and title to the everlafting happinefs of heaven. It is a bleffing that runs through this world and the world to come. It is a total and complete deliverance from all that you feel, and all that you fear. It is all-fufficient and eternal falvation.

Whatfoever your ruin, your diftreff, or your danger be, there is fomething in this falvation that is fuited to relieve them all; there is relief and hope in Chrift. Let us then awaken all the powers within us to attend to the invitations of divine mercy. Are we blind and ignorant of God, and heaven, and divine things? Chrift is the light of this lower world, John i. 9. He has *compassion on them that are ignorant and out of the way*, Heb. v. 2. Are we foolifh? He is *made of God*

God wisdom to us, 1 Cor. i. 30. Are we unclean and defiled with many iniquities? *The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin*, 1 John i. 7. Are we guilty before God? He is *our propitiation and atonement*, Rom. iii. 25. and the *Lord our righteousness*, Jer. xxiii. 6. Have we lost the divine favour? He is the *only Mediator betwixt God and man*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. And the great reconciler *to make our peace*, Eph. ii. 15. Are we unholy? He can change our natures, and *sanctify our souls*, Heb. ii. 11. Are we hard-hearted and impenitent, so that we cannot mourn for our sins as we would do? He is exalted to *bestow repentance*, as well as *forgiveness*, Acts v. 31. Are we weak, and unable to resist temptation, or to perform our duty? He is *our strength*, Isa. xlv. 24. Are we sick and dying? He is our *physician*, Matth. ix. 12. Are we *dead in trespasses and sins*? He can quicken us to a divine life, and make us live to God; for the living Spirit is with him. Christ himself is *our life*; and though the body of the saints must die, yet he shall raise it again to *life everlasting*, John v. 21, 26, 29.

Surely if we are awake, and in our right senses, there is not a soul of us in this assembly, but must feel itself under some of these unhappy circumstances. Come then, Ye sinful and distressed souls, ye helpless creatures, ye perishing dying wretches of every kind: Come, let me lead you to this hea-

venly Saviour; and may my own soul join with yours to partake of this full, this all-sufficient salvation. Blessed Redeemer, make us all willing to be saved, and let us seek our help from thy hands.

I go on now to the *fourth Enquiry*: And that is, *What must we do in order to be partakers of this blessing?*

The words of the invitation are, *Look unto me*. Now when persons in distress are called *to look* to any one for help, it implies *to trust in him, to depend upon him, to seek help* from his power and goodness. See the history of the cripple, who seeing Peter and John going into the temple, *asked an alms*: And they said, *Look on us*: Upon which he *gave heed to them, expecting to receive something of them*, Acts iii. 4, 5. So *looking unto God* signifies dependence on him, and expectation of mercy from him. ‘We know not what to do,’ saith Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 12. ‘But our eyes are upon thee.’ So Psal. xxxiv. 5. ‘They looked unto him, and were lightened.’ Micah vii. 7. When there was universal distress round about, saith the prophet, ‘I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation.’

It is evident from the sacred, as well as the common use of this word, that it signifies the same as *believing* or *trusting in Christ* in the New Testament, which is the appointed means

means of our obtaining a share in his salvation. Acts xvi. 31. 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Sinners of the Gentiles are required in my text to *look to him*. It is foretold by the same prophet, that 'to him shall the Gentiles seek,' Isa. xi. 10. Which is cited and interpreted by St. Paul, Rom. xv. 12. 'In him shall the Gentiles trust.'

The soul then, that is so far sensible of its past iniquities, its guilt, and danger of hell, and that feels so much of its inward sinful nature, appetites and passions, as to know its own inability to procure pardon of God for sins past, or to make itself holy for time to come, and sees also in Christ such a glorious all-sufficiency of help and relief, and upon this account commits itself by prayer and humble trust, or dependence, into the hands of Jesus Christ, as an all-sufficient Saviour, sincerely and earnestly desirous of his complete salvation in all the parts of it, the holiness and the happiness; this soul is a *believer in Christ*; this soul has *looked to Christ* in the sense of my text, and shall certainly *be saved*.

Because the duty of *faith, trusting, or believing*, is so necessary to salvation, therefore it has pleased God in his word to render the notion of it plain and easy, by many metaphors and figures of speech, to accommodate the capacities and understandings of the

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meanest. And these are borrowed also from the most useful and active powers of nature, and the most common actions of life.

When the metaphor is taken from the *feet*, *believing* is called a *coming to Christ*. Matth. xi. 28. 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' John vi. 37. 'He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' In another place it is described by *fleeing for refuge*, Heb. vi. 18. Which is a figure borrowed from the *feet* also; but including danger, fear, and speed.

When it is borrowed from the *hands*, it is called *receiving of Christ*. John i. 12. 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name.' And Heb. vi. 18. *It is a laying hold on the hope set before us.*

Sometimes the metaphor is taken from the *tongue*, and then *faith* is described by *calling on Christ*. Rom. x. 11, 12, 13. 'Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. He that believeth on him shall not be ashamed; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.'

In my text the figure of speech is taken from the *eyes*; and the direction is, *Look unto me and be saved*. There is something in this way of speaking that more exactly suits the words *faith* and *believing*; for as they imply
both

both a belief of the all-sufficiency of Christ to save, and a trusting him for this salvation, so *looking* implies that the poor dying creature has *seen* the all-sufficiency that is in Christ, and thence is encouraged to *hope and expect* help from him.

It is such a *look* of hope and dependence as a helpless creature, just dying of the pestilence, or a mortal stab, would express toward some angel-physician that was coming to him with a vital and all-healing balm: Such a *look* as a condemned criminal, at the place of execution, would cast toward some swift messenger afar off, who has a pardon in his hand; or such a *look* as a child, just ready to be slaughtered by a spiteful enemy, would express towards his father, well-armed, and hastening to his deliverance.

We may suppose the saving act of *faith* in this place to be described by the word *looking*, for these reasons.

1st, Because *the persons who are called are in the ends of the earth*: And thus the propriety of expression is preserved, and the metaphor appears more beautiful. Those who are so far off from Christ might complain, "We are feeble dying creatures, we cannot *come* to him, as with our *feet*, nor *lay hold* of him as with our *hands*; but we can *look* toward him, though we are in the ends of the earth:" As Jonah did when in the depths of the sea. Jonah ii. 4. 'I am

‘ cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again ‘ towards thy holy temple.’ Now the *temple* was a type of the human nature of Christ, in which God was pleased to dwell; and the Jews in their prayers, even *from the ends of the earth*, and in Heathen lands, turned their eyes towards this temple in humble hope of acceptance, 1 Kings viii. 29, 35, &c. So may the poor perishing sinner say, “ Though “ I am far from God and holiness, and all “ hope in myself or in any creatures that are “ near me, yet I am within reach of the call “ of Christ; I hear the voice of his inviting “ grace; I will look towards him as my only “ hope; I will keep my eyes upon him and “ trust in him; I will by him draw near to “ God; and my soul shall live.”

Idly, *Believing* in Christ may be described in this place by *looking to him* to express *the lowest and the weakest degree of faith*, for the encouragement of poor convinced trembling sinners. When persons are awakened to a lively apprehension of their guilt, and a quick sense of their danger, and see themselves every moment liable to perish under the wrath of an offended God, and at the same time feel their own utter inability to save themselves, it is proper that the *act of faith whereby we are saved* should be expressed in the easiest manner, that may allure them toward Christ, the only Saviour, and may encourage them to hope. When they are, as it were, at *the ends*
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of the earth, at a wide distance from *God* and *Christ*, they may *look* towards him, and send a wish of desire and dependence that way; like *dying drowning sailors in a storm*, that *look* towards the shore, to see if there be any hope: And such a *look* as this is ordained of *God* to derive all salvation from so almighty and complete a Saviour as *Jesus Christ* is: For it contains in it the whole nature of saving faith, as the flower and the fruit are contained in a little green bud, though the several parts and the leaves of them are not yet unfolded, nor appear to sight.

Such a *look* of a convinced sinner to *Christ* implies in it a distressing sense of his sin and present danger, a belief that there is help for him in *Christ*, and an aversion of the eye from every thing else, a renouncing all other dependences, an earnest readiness and desire to partake of this salvation, such as *Christ* offers it; that is, to make him holy as well as happy: And it includes also thus much of *trust* or *confidence*, that if the soul has any *hope* at all of its own salvation, *Christ* is the only ground of this *hope*. There is and will be some sort of *expectation* of relief from the hand to which we look, when we see ourselves perishing.

Illdly, *Looking to Christ* for salvation is a word that shows *how little hand we have in our own deliverance from sin and death*. *Israel* has destroyed himself, but in *God* alone is his

help, Hosea xiii. 9. It is not possible that our *looking* should effect our salvation of itself, or do any thing toward it any other way, than as it is dependent on another to save us.

Faith itself is that grace that has the least show of self-activity, self-sufficiency, or self-honour in it. Rom. iv. 16. *Therefore our salvation is ordained to be of faith, that it might be of grace.* It is the law or constitution of faith, as the means of our salvation, that it must *exclude all boasting*, Rom. iii. 27. That all that are saved *might glory only in the Lord*, 1 Cor. i. 31. Now when *faith* itself is expressed in so low and feeble exercise of it as *looking unto Christ*, it does in a most emphatical manner exclude every thing of *self*; it utterly forbids all boasting, and renders all the honour to Christ alone. How can a dying wretch pretend to any glory or merit in his own salvation, who only looked and was saved?

IVthly, There is in this way of expression a natural and easy reference to the command *of looking* to the *brazen serpent*, which was a type of Christ, and which was to confer health and life on the wounded and dying Israelites, by their *looking* up to it in the wilderness. See John iii. 14, 15. ‘ And as
 ‘ Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilder-
 ‘ nefs, even so must the Son of man be lifted
 ‘ up; that whosoever believeth in him should
 ‘ not

‘not perish, but have everlasting life.’ Compared with Numb. xxi. 8. ‘The Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.’ Happy people, for whom so divine a remedy was provided against a national mischief. So sovereign an antidote against spreading and mortal poison! Those that were stung and perishing, though they were at the utmost limits of the camp, might, as it were from *the borders of the wilderness*, look up to the brazen remedy, and find health and life: From the ends of the land they looked and were saved.

Physicians were useless in that day, and all medicines insignificant. The swift and fiery poison wrought powerfully in them that were bitten, and they were quickly brought to the borders of the grave. But before their eyes were closed in death, if they could but cast *a look* towards the appointed signal, the divine medium of salvation, behold they are miraculously healed, and live. And which of all the sons or daughters of Israel could boast of any thing of his own in this wondrous deliverance, when on the very confines of life and the brink of the grave they were healed by a *look* to the brazen image of a serpent? Such is the perishing sinner casting an eye toward Christ for salvation?

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But some poor trembling sinner will be ready to say, "Surely this is so little and so low an act of faith, that I am ready to question whether this can save me or no: How shall I know whether my looking to Christ is of that kind as shall be effectual to my salvation?"

Now in answer to such an enquiry, let the fearful soul remember what I have said before under the *second particular*, concerning the several acts of the soul that are secretly included in this *looking to Jesus*; and ask itself whether it has put forth these acts or no? Besides this, I would mention also these *two properties of saving faith*, as it is described by *looking*.

1st, It must be such a *look* as immediately *affects the heart with love and sorrow; sorrow for our own sins, and love to Christ our Saviour*. If we have ever seen him with sincere delight as a Saviour from sin, we shall mourn heartily that ever we were sinners. We cannot but repent for sin, while we believe or hope for the forgiveness of it through such condescending grace. And we cannot but love so compassionate and almighty a friend, that has delivered us from eternal destruction. Having seen Christ, we are weaned from sin, and we love the Lord. Mary Magdalene, that remarkable sinner, lying at the foot of Christ, *wept much and loved much*, Luke vii. 38, 47. You have
never

never seen Christ, as your Saviour, if your sins are not the objects of your shame and sorrow, or if Jesus be not the object of your desire and love.

2d, It must be such a *look* as *changes the soul and temper into another image, even the image of Christ.* 2 Cor. iii. ult. 'We, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.' In the glass of the gospel beholding the glorious holiness of our Lord Jesus Christ, our very tempers are changed into his holy likeness, from one degree of grace to another, till it advance to complete glory; and then we shall be made more perfectly *like him, by seeing him as he is, or face to face,* 1 John iii. 2. There will be a shine of holiness on our conversation in this world, as reflected from the glory and holiness of Christ, whom we have seen, even as the face of Moses shone when he had seen God: Exod. xxxiv. 29, 30. That is, when he had seen the Son of God conversing with him in a visible glory.

A saving *look* of faith to our Lord Jesus Christ will happily influence all the powers of nature, and all the actions of life. This is seldom done indeed at once, but by slow degrees. The longer we behold him, and the oftener we look to him, the more we shall grow like him. We must *look to Jesus* as our example, as well as *the author and finisher of our faith*; that we may *lay aside*
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the sin that so easily besets us, and run with patience the race of holiness that is set before us, Heb. xii. 1, 2. In vain do we pretend to have seen Christ, if we do not find ourselves at all beginning to become new creatures.

Thus I have finished my answer to the *fourth Enquiry; (viz.) How we are to come by this salvation; and why the act of faith is expressed by looking to Christ.*

DISCOURSE VIII.

God in Christ is the Saviour of the
Ends of the Earth :

O R,

Faith represented in its lowest Degrees.

'The Second Part of this SERMON.

Isa. xlv. 22.

*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends
of the earth; for I am God, and there is
none else.*

THIS is an invitation of surprising and
sovereign mercy to creatures in the ut-
most distress and misery. It is the great and
blessed God himself, in the person of Jesus
Christ, calling the Gentile world to salvation.
It is *God in Christ* inviting sinners from the
ends

ends of the earth, and the borders of hell, to partake of heaven and happiness. It is *Emmanuel*, God with us, who calls us *to look unto him, and be saved*. If we are sensible of our own misery, if we are weary of sin, and would be secured from the wrath to come, let us look to him as a Saviour, with an eye of faith and holy dependence.

This was the subject of the former Discourse.

Let us now go on to the *last question*, and learn, *What assurance we can have from the text, that we shall possess this salvation in the way proposed*; or, that faith in God our Saviour shall be attended with such success.

The reason is given by the prophet in almighty and convincing language: *For I am God; and there is none else*.

This sentence has two distinct parts in it, and each of them carries strong reasons for the support of our faith, and the encouragement of our hope.

The *first* part is the assertion of his own Godhead, *I am God*; which carries in it these two supports or assurances.

1st, *I am God*; Therefore *I am all-sufficient to save*; and therefore, Ye dying sinners, *Look unto me, and be saved*. What is there that the most wretched of creatures can stand in need of, but there is a supply to be found among the treasures of a God? When a God undertakes

undertakes to be a Saviour, the creature cannot perish. There is light and wisdom enough in him to make the fool wise for ever, and to scatter all our darkness: There is power enough in God to make the weakest soul strong in grace, and active in every duty: There is love enough in him to melt the most stubborn heart, and change an old enemy into an humble and willing subject. Ye may be assured of this salvation if ye look to Jesus, who is God, and therefore *mighty to save*, Isa. lxiii. 1.

There is an all-sufficiency in his blood and righteousness to atone for infinite transgressions, and to procure the everlasting favour of God: For this High Priest or Mediator himself is one with God, he is God, and his sacrifice on earth, and his intercession in heaven, are all over dignified with Godhead, and thereby become almighty for salvation.

2dly, *I am God; and therefore have a right to prescribe the means of obtaining my salvation. Look therefore unto me, ye sinners, and be saved.* I will give it to every one that *looks*; he that *believes* on me *shall be saved* from sin and death, Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 15, 16. God is rich in grace; and if he will manifest the glory and freedom of it in the grant of his new covenant, and will promise salvation to faith, and not insist upon that personal perfect obedience which once

was required, let the thankful sinner rejoice, and submit, and give God the honour of his abounding mercy. Let him pursue the highest measures of holiness, under the melting influences of gratitude, and the constraining power of divine love.

This is naturally implied in the first part of the words, *I am God*. But when he adds this glorious clause, *and there is none else*, he seems, in the second part of this sentence, to intimate these three things further to us.

1st, *There is none that can save besides me*. The salvation of a sinner from the ends of the earth, from the borders of hell, is too great a work for any being that is less than God. What mere creature has worth enough to make compensation to the great God for the sins of men? Or what created power has influence enough to persuade God to be reconciled? Is there knowledge enough in a mere fellow-creature, intimately to acquaint himself with all the thoughts and wants of a perishing sinner? Is there power enough to new-mould his nature? To strike divine light into his conscience? To bend his stubborn will, and subdue all his powers to the obedience of the gospel? Has any mere creature power sufficient to change a dead sinner into a living saint? To secure him through every temptation? To fit him for the society of God and angels? And to bring him through
death

death to eternal glory? All this must be done if a sinner be saved.

2dly, These words also imply, *There is none but God who has a right to prescribe the means of our salvation.* If he says to sinners, *Look, and be saved*; Who shall dare forbid the blessing, or appoint a different way to obtain it? If the Lord of heaven has said to poor perishing creatures on earth, *Ye shall be saved if ye believe*: Shall the Jew dare to impose circumcision as necessary to salvation? Or the Papists command penances or pilgrimages? Or shall the conceited Pharisee require a perfection of holiness, and a righteousness made up of the works of the law, in order to obtain eternal life? The righteousness of the law saith, *Do this, and live*; But the righteousness of faith saith, *Believe, and be saved*, Rom. x.

It is granted, that this *saving faith* must be a vital principle in the soul, that manifests itself in repentance, and endeavours after universal holiness; for a dead faith cannot save: But it is not our holiness that can provide acceptance with an offended God; it is faith in the sacrifice and righteousness of the Redeemer, that is the means appointed for this end. The great God has appointed it, and who shall dare to forbid? His authority is sovereign, and his appointment a sufficient warrant for our hope.

L

3dly,

3dly, *I am God, and there is none else*, includes thus much also for the comfort and assurance of the believing sinner; that *there is none can prevent your salvation, if you comply with the gracious proposals. Who shall condemn if God will justify?* Rom. viii. 33, 34. *Who can pluck us out of the hand of Christ, or separate us from his love?* John x. 28. *Who shall destroy, if God will save?* It is his property, and his divine prerogative, to kill and to make alive, to save and to destroy. Deut. xxxii. 39, 43. ‘ See now, that I, even ‘ I am he; and there is no god with me; I ‘ kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; ‘ neither is there any that can deliver out of ‘ my hand. Rejoice’ therefore, ‘ O ye nations,’ ye Gentiles, together ‘ with his people Israel; for he will render vengeance to ‘ his adversaries, and be merciful to his land.’ Isa. xliii. 11, 13. ‘ I, even I, am the Lord; ‘ and beside me there is no favour. I will ‘ work; and who shall let it?’

Thus it appears, that there is abundant ground from the words of my text, for a poor perishing sinner to raise his hope to assurance that he shall be saved, if he does but sincerely answer this gracious invitation from heaven, and trust in God, as he is revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ, for salvation, according to that description of true faith which is given us in the word of God.

All

All the *Improvements* I shall make of this Discourse at present, shall be contained in these *four Reflections*.

1st Reflection. *We may learn from this scripture, how extensive and glorious is the salvation of Christ!* How answerable is it in every respect to the weakneses and the wants, to the miseries, dangers, and fears, of a convinced and awakened sinner? It reaches to those who are perishing in the ends of the earth. Let us survey them a little more particularly.

(1.) Is our guilt and distress exceeding great and dreadful? Behold here a salvation of rich fulness and divine all-sufficiency; for it is a God that provides it. The riches of grace, the depths of wisdom, and the efforts of almighty power are employed in this blessed work; and the mercy is expressed in the manner of a speaking God: He who said, *Let there be light, and there was light*, says also, *Look, and be saved*: And the sinner looks, and receives salvation. It is a God who *commands deliverances for Jacob*, and salvation for his people, Psal. xliv. 4.

(2.) Are our enemies great and mighty? Are the flesh, and the world, and the powers of hell engaged against the safety of our souls? Yet our salvation is perfectly and eternally secure; for he that saves us is God: No creature can divest us of it, and *there is no other*

God besides him. ‘Neither height, nor depth,
 ‘nor principalities, nor powers, nor life, nor
 ‘death, nor any creature, shall separate us
 ‘from the love of God in Christ Jesus our
 ‘Lord,’ Rom. viii. 34.

(3.) Are we at such a dreadful distance from God, that we seem to be on the utmost verge of all hope, at the ends of life and this world, at the borders of hell and despair? Yet we are within the reach of the call of mercy, within the sound of the voice of Christ, and his extensive grace. *Look from the ends of the earth, and be saved.*

(4.) Are we poor impotent creatures, that can do nothing to make satisfaction to God for our own sins, and little or nothing towards the restoring our souls to the likeness of God, and the recovery of holiness? Do we stand in need of such a Saviour, that must *work all our works for us, and in us?* Behold such a one in my text: He requires of you but to *look to him,* and trust in him, in the manner I have described, and the salvation is free and sure. Christ himself will bestow it on us.

There are some poor, melancholly, desponding creatures, who are even almost overwhelmed with a sense of their guilt, and of the power of sin in them, and are just giving up all hope, who have need to have the riches and amazing condescensions of grace to be set before them, in such a manner as this. And blessed be God, that his gospel contains

contains in it such abounding mercy to creatures so miserable.

We may therefore cry out with joy and thankfulness, and holy wonder; *O the fulness and sufficiency* of this salvation! It is God who provides it, who knows, and can supply all the vast variety of our wants! *O the wide extent* of it! It reaches to all nations, to all characters of persons, even to the ends of the earth. *O the rich freedom* of this grace, that requires us to *look, and be saved!* *O what free and full, what large and extensive, what rich and sovereign salvation!*

II^d Reflection. *What a blessed security of this salvation is given to all those who comply with the invitation of this grace!* It is as safe as it is extensive. No creature can take away what a God resolves to bestow. No finite being can prevent what an infinite Being resolves to do. If he that is God will save, none else can destroy, or frustrate the designed salvation? Who shall forbid the blessing that the Almighty Saviour will confer on those who look to him from the ends of the earth? The enemy, even the most malicious and powerful enemy, whose name is *Abaddon*, or the *Destroyer*, is but a creature; but the friend, the mighty and merciful friend, whose name is *Jesus*, or the *Saviour*, is God, even *Emmanuel*, God with us. When he stands upon the throne of his mercy, and

cries out to perishing finners, *Look to me from the ends of the earth, and be saved*; not all the powers of hell shall be able to destroy the finners that look to him, and accept of his salvation. What a glorious relief is found in my text against all temptations to despondency. Your Saviour is God, and there is none besides him.

III^d Reflection. *How much do those finners deserve to perish for ever, who will not be saved upon such gracious terms?* In vain do you turn your eyes around you, and *look* to one creature, and seek to another for help; your ruin is too great, and your misery too deep and dismal, for any power but that of God, to raise and recover you. *If they who refused to hear the voice of Moses, who spake from earth, died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall ye be thought worthy, who refuse to hearken to the voice of God speaking from heaven?* Can you ever imagine it possible that you should escape the divine vengeance, who neglect so great, so divine a salvation?

Consider, ye finners, that are this day under the call of grace, though now you seem to be as it were at *the ends of the earth*, afar off from God and Christ, from all that is holy, and all that is happy, yet you are not utterly abandoned to destruction, while the voice of mercy sounds in your ears. But
take

take heed that ye hearken while ye are called to-day, lest ye perish before the morrow come. Remember this, that the silver trumpet of mercy will not always sound: Christ Jesus will not always say, *Look unto me, and be saved.* Ye are now upon the confines of hell; if once death open its dark gates, and hell has shut her mouth upon you, you will then be far out of the sight of Jesus the Saviour, and beyond the call of his mercy for ever.

Let me turn my voice now for a few minutes to the gospel Israel, *to the children of the kingdom.* While I have been inviting the *ends of the earth* to be saved, and have been calling sinners afar off from God and his church to receive Jesus Christ and his salvation, is there any dispensation for you to neglect it, who dwell in the midst of the visible church? You who were born of holy parents, who have lived in religious families, and are by this means brought near to the kingdom of heaven? Are you ready to flatter yourselves that you are out of danger of perishing? Have a care of vain presumption, and foolish feeble hopes. The wounded Israelites, who lay just under the brazen serpent of old, might die and perish there in their own folly, if they refused to look up to the appointed remedy; while some from the distant borders of the camp looked, and were

faved: But ſuch obſtinate wretches muſt be unpitied in death.

Attend then, ye *ſinners in Zion*, and hearken to the voice of God the Saviour. Chriſt has been brought near to you in his goſpel, his promiſes, and his holy ordinances; you have read of him in his word, you have heard him ſpeak by his miniſters, and you have learned much of him from the inſtructions of your pious parents: Ye have begun to ſee ſomething of him in his glory and grace; and will you now turn your eyes away from him? Will you look upon the vanities of the preſent evil world, and fix the eye of your ſouls, your deſires, hopes, and wiſhes, upon trifle and impertinence, and neglect the offer of heavenly treaſures? Have you ſeen and heard ſo much of Chriſt already, that you have grown weary of him? Are the Lord and his ſalvation grown cheap and common things to you, of little value, not worth a look? Will you, who are near to the kingdom of heaven, reſuſe to enter in, and let thoſe that come from *the ends of the earth* obtain the inheritance, and ſeize the happineſs before you? O how aggravated will your condemnation be? How dreadful the agonies of your torment, to ſee perishing ſinners come from diſtant regions, *from the eaſt and the weſt*, from poor wicked families, and houſes of iniquity, and receive the ſalvation of Chriſt; while you are *caſt out into utter darkneſs?*

darkness? There shall be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, Matth. viii. 11, 12.

IVth Reflection. The last *Use* I shall make of this Discourse, is to take a *short survey of that salvation, of the happiness and the holiness thereof, that is derived to a soul by a sincere look of faith to Jesus the Saviour.*

O what a *blessed change* is made by our *looking to Christ!* A change, I say, in the very eye-sight of our souls, and in our view and survey of all things round about us, so far as we have any concern in them! What a *blessed change* in our judgment and esteem of them! We look upon things with another eye than before, and things put on a new face. Faith *looking to Christ* for salvation sets all things in a different light before the eyes of the soul, and gives quite another view of them. It is like some heavenly glass applied to the organ of sense, that not only assists and improves our sight, but represents every thing to us in a divine light, even such as they appear to the blessed spirits above.

(1.) It alters the view and appearance of *all the great and gay things of this life.* All the *treasures, and pomp, and entertainments of this world,* were once the most tempting objects we could look upon; but now we *look* on the world, with all the gayest and the richest scenes of it, as a little mean and despicable thing; for we have seen Christ
and

and heaven; and when the world begins to flatter us again, and to *look* great and tempting in our eyes, let us *look* again to Jesus, and his salvation; that the world may lose its splendour and allurements.

(2.) Once a *poor* Christian in a cottage, or in a vile raiment, was contemptible in our sight, now we *look* on the saints, even in the meanest circumstance, as the *excellent of the earth*; for they are heirs of heaven, they are like to Christ, and formed after the blessed image of him whom we have seen with an eye of faith and love. Holy Saviour, and holy saints! *They*, the excellent of the earth, and *He*, the ornament of heaven.

(3.) *The Bible* heretofore we looked on but little better than a common book; or, perhaps, it was our aversion. The New Testament gave us no pleasure. The true glories of it were hidden from us. The gospel was a hidden gospel; but now we *look upon it* as our most valuable treasure and portion; and we often *look into it*; for we find Jesus Christ there, with all his salvation.

Every part of the Bible carries quite another aspect than once it did. We *look* upon the promises as an inventory of our inheritance; and we read those words, *All things are yours*, with a relish of unknown delight, because of our own interest in them: And as they are repeated twice, to confirm our faith, so we can read them often, and dwell upon them

them with pleasure. *All are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's,* 1 Cor. iii. 21. Then by virtue of this promise we can *look to the heavens and the earth; to the sun, moon, and stars; to Paul, Apollos, and Cephas; to ministers, and to angels; to this world, and the other; to life and death; to things present, and to come;* with a humble and pleasurable belief of our interest in them, so far as we have need of them to make us holy or happy.

And as we *look on the promises* of the Bible with another eye than formerly, so we behold *the precepts* of it in a sweeter light: We read them now as the rules of our happiness, as the model of our new nature, as the holy transcript of the perfections of God, and the blessed advices of our dear Redeemer. We look on his *commandments*, and behold they are *no more grievous to us; for his law is our delight,* 1 John v. 3. Psal. cxix. 77.

As for the *threatenings* of the book of God, we once beheld them, perhaps, with a regardless eye, and a stupid heart: Or if we were awakened, we read them with utmost terror, as the messengers of our damnation: We beheld them as so many angels with flaming swords, to forbid our entrance into Paradise. But since we have *seen Jesus* with an eye of saving faith, the *threatenings* of scripture have no more such a dreadful aspect. Since the *sword has awoke against the Man*
Man

that was God's Fellow, and all the necessary vengeance was executed on Christ, our surety, we behold the threatenings as disarmed of their terror, and no longer a bar to our salvation.

(4.) The *face of God*, shining in his terrible attributes of *holiness* and *justice*, was dreadful to our souls, so that we could not *look upon* him, and we turned our eyes away from God: As for his attributes of love and mercy, we had no relish of them; for we had no solid hope in them. We saw nothing in God desirable and delightful to us: We stood afar off; we neglected and forgot him; or else we hid ourselves from him, as Adam did, because we were afraid. But now, since we have beheld *God in Christ*, as *reconciling sinners to himself*, now we can look upon him in all his awful and his peaceful attributes without dismay; we can survey and dwell upon all his glories with a sacred pleasure; and lift up our eyes towards him with humble confidence, in prayer or in praise; for we *behold* him as God reconciled, and a Father, since we have seen Jesus the Mediator, and trusted in his name.

(5.) With what surprize and overwhelming fear did we once *behold approaching afflictions*, when *we were without God, without Christ, and without hope?* But now we can *look upon* sufferings and sorrows without being overwhelmed by them; we can *look upon* the
huge

huge swelling waves without painful apprehensions, and see the floods rise high without fear of being drowned; for we have *seen Jesus* as it were *walking on the water*; and we have heard him *saying, It is I, be not afraid*. We can look to him when we are afar off from our friends, even in the ends of the earth, and find light in darkness, and relief in the midst of our distresses.

(6.) How formidable once was the *face of death*. No pencil can describe the monster so hideous to the sense, as he appeared constantly to our awakened souls, before we had seen Christ. What horror did our spirits feel, and our flesh shudder at the thought of his approach! How frightfully, and yet how justly, did our guilty fancy paint him, and all his attendants, in their terrible array! But the faint *looks on death* now as an harmless thing, for he has seen Jesus disarm him; Christ has *abolished sin*, and taken away the sting from *death*. The lively Christian can *look on it* as a friend, or rather as a slave subdued to the service of his Lord, sent on a glorious message, to fetch him to dwell where his blessed Lord is. *They shall be where I am, to behold my glory*, John xvii.

(7.) The man who has seen Jesus with an eye of faith, can look to the *last great tribunal* without terror; for he knows and is acquainted with Christ the Judge: He has seen him, and trusted all the important concerns of that day
into

into his hands. ‘I know,’ saith the Christian, ‘whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep all that I have committed to him unto that day,’ 2 Tim. i. 12. Therefore he can see *the judgment-seat, and the books opened*, without dismay or fearful expectation; for he has seen Jesus cross out all his sins with the blood of his sacrifice: Christ has cancelled them for ever from the great register of heaven, the book of divine remembrance; and has shewn him his own name *written in the Lamb’s book of life, from the foundation of the world.*

(8.) Then he may turn his eyes to all that *glorious assembly on high*; he may *look* on the saints in their robes of light, as companions of his blessedness, and the troops of angels as ministers of fire, to execute vengeance on all his enemies; and heralds to prepare his way to the upper heavens. He may fix his eyes with most intense and transporting delight on Christ his sovereign Lord, and behold him hereafter with eyes of sense, amidst the honours of heaven, whom he had beheld here with an eye of faith, amidst the sufferings of the cross, and the agonies of the garden. “This is he, says the saint, whose voice of
“mercy I heard in yonder perishing world,
“and to whom I looked *from the ends of the*
“*earth*, that *I might be saved*. I believed
“him then to have all the fulness of the
“Godhead dwelling in him bodily; and as
“God,

“ God, manifest in the flesh, I worshipped
“ him, and trusted in him. I behold him
“ now as the brightness of his Father’s glory,
“ and his divinest image: I find him to be
“ a complete and all-sufficient Saviour; for
“ I stand possessed of his divine salvation.
“ *My knee bows, and my tongue confesses that*
“ *Jesus is Lord. He is one with the Father.*
“ *To him that sits upon the throne, and to the*
“ *Lamb, be blessing and honour, power and*
“ *glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*”

DISCOURSE IX.

FAITH built on KNOWLEDGE.

PREACHED 1711.

The First Part of this SERMON.

2 Tim. i. 12.

— *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, against that day.*

WHEN this Epistle was written to Timothy, St. Paul, the writer of it, was a prisoner at Rome; there he lay under a heavy chain, and was exposed to public shame for the sake of the gospel: He had death in a near view, and was preparing for the bloody stroke. For in the sixth verse of the last chapter he says, ‘ I am now ready
‘ to

‘ to be offered, and the time of my departure
 ‘ is at hand: I have fought the good fight,
 ‘ and my course is finished.’

But he seems to assure himself upon the words of my text, and grows bold upon this foundation of solid comfort: As though he should say, “ None of these things move me, “ nor am I afraid to die; for I shall not be “ lost: I suffer; *but I am not ashamed: I know “ whom I have trusted* to take care of me in “ death, and all beyond it; even to the great “ day of retribution.”

It is pleasing and glorious to see this apostle, this little mean figure of a man, whose presence and whose speech were both contemptible; (2 Cor. x. 10.) to see how he builds upon this hope, and assumes divine courage in the midst of pain and shame, in the very face of scandal and martyrdom. “ Let me die out of this world, though with “ infamy, violence, and blood; but I have “ been told of life, and joys, and honours, “ in the world to come; and that with such “ evidence, as to constrain my belief: And “ *I know whom I have believed.* Let my barbarous executioner and the sword rob me “ of the short remains of this present life; “ but I have committed my soul, and all my “ infinite concerns, for a long *hereafter*, into “ the hands of an almighty and a sure friend, “ *and I am persuaded he is able to keep what I “ have committed to him against that day.*”

This is the language of a lively hope, and these are the words that have administered constant support to many dying Christians. Now that such a hope may appear to be rationally built upon this text, and that our present meditations and discourse may proceed with more regularity and profit, I must briefly explain the words.

The chief things that want any explication are these four.

I. Who is this great friend of St. Paul's, whom he has known and believed.

II. What he means by *believing*.

III. What it is he has committed into the hands of this friend.

IV. What is that day, or period of time, when he expected to find all safe which he had thus intrusted him with.

It, *Who is this great friend of St. Paul's, whom he had believed, and of whose ability he was so well persuaded?*

These words can be properly applied to none so well as to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Mediator; and that for these reasons.

It is he that is spoken of in the context, verse 10. 'Who has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light thro' the gospel.' And it is this gospel of Christ
for

for which Paul is not ashamed to suffer, in the words just before the text.

It is Christ who is recommended as the proper object of belief or trust in the New Testament, as God the Father was under the Old: So our Lord himself declares, John xiv. 1. ‘Ye believe in God; believe also in me.’ This was the great duty that all the first preachers of the gospel pressed upon their hearers, even a belief on Jesus Christ. This was the perpetual subject of St. Paul’s exhortations, the matter of his practice, and the ground of his hope; the instances are so numerous, that it is needless and endless to collect them.

It is Jesus Christ into whose hands the Father has put all his saints and children, and committed them to his care, that he may keep them, John xvii. 6, 9, 12. ‘Thine they were, ‘and thou gavest them to me out of the world; ‘and I have kept them through thy name.’ And therefore into the same hands a child of God most naturally commits himself.

Idly, What does the word *believe* signify here?

By *believing* we are here to understand an assent to the revelation that Jesus Christ had made of himself, as sent from the Father to save sinners, and a trust in him for this salvation: For the word *πιστευσα*, in the Greek, naturally includes both, and the following part

of the verse confirms this sense; which will be made more completely evident in the improvement of this Discourse.

Here let it be remarked, from the bold and pathetic manner of speaking, that the apostle appears as a strong believer, as one that had much acquaintance with Christ, and long trusted in him, and every day gained further confirmation of his faith. Observe the expression, *I know whom I have believed*, and am come to a confident *persuasion* in myself *that he is able*, &c. It is a faith rising to divine joy; for he mentions it as his support against shame and suffering.

IIIIdly, When we enquire, *What it is that the apostle committed to Christ?* I think there is no need to limit or confine the trust; all that belongs to poor sinful man, which God the Father had appointed Christ to take care of, may be included in this *depositum*, this important trust. I have committed my whole person, soul and body, with all my spiritual concerns in this world, and all my everlasting interest in the world to come, into the hands of Christ; my soul, and the affairs of my eternity. And this the apostle seems to have chiefly in his eye, because he was now ready to leave the body, and all things of this present life. So Christ on the cross commits his soul into the hands of his Father, Luke xxiii. 46. ‘Father, into thy hands I commend my
‘spirit.’

‘spirit.’ So Stephen, the first martyr, addresses himself to Christ, Acts vii. 59. ‘Lord Jesus receive my spirit.’ So David, by a spirit of prophecy, in evangelic expressions, betrusts his soul with God his Redeemer, Psal. xxxi. 5. ‘Into thy hands I commit my spirit; thou hast redeemed it, O Lord God of truth.’

IVthly, *What is that day, that great day, which the apostle means in the text?* Without doubt, he refers to the *last judgment*, which is *that day*, by way of eminence, that day when the works of all other days shall be reviewed, when all mankind shall appear together upon the earth, that have lived in several successive days, and years, and ages, and a decisive sentence shall be passed upon all, without a possibility of reverse: The day on which the fate of their eternity shall depend, and be determined. It is the custom of the apostle to speak of this day in such a way of absolute eminence, without particular descriptions: So he does twice in this same epistle; chap. i. 18. and iv. 8. And it is expressly evident in 2 Theff. i. 10. he means this last great day, when *Christ shall appear in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that obey him not; and shall come to be glorified in all them that believe.*

Though believers in Christ, who have committed themselves to his charge, find their souls safe in the moment after death,

and the beginning of their intellectual heaven, yet this is more insensible to other men, and unseen to the world: The day of judgement is a more remarkable and conspicuous day in the eyes of all the creation, angels and men; in this day shall Christ openly deliver up his great trust to the Father, who committed all elect sinners into his hands: In this day shall he make it appear, that he has been able and faithful to keep whatsoever God and the saints have committed to him.

Besides, till this day come, Christ has not fulfilled his commission, nor answered his trust for which he is engaged to his Father, and to believers; for this is one part of it, that he should take care of their dying bodies, and *raise them up at the last day*, John vi. 39. The apostle, though he well knew the happiness of separate souls, that were *absent from the body*, and immediately present with the *Lord*, yet he more frequently points to this bright and distant day of the resurrection, when he invites our hope abroad beyond the limits of life and time, to give it the fairest and the longest prospect.

Thus having sufficiently unfolded whatsoever might seem doubtful in the text, let us proceed to a more particular improvement of it: And to this end we may comprise the sense in this one Proposition or Doctrine.

Doctrine.

Doctrinē. *A Christian lays a solid foundation for his faith and joyful hope in the knowledge of the person whom he trusts.* He has some good acquaintance with that great friend of his to whom he commits all his concerns from time to eternity; and upon this he builds his confidence and comfort; and from this he rises to joy and triumph. The words of my text are the language of an advanced and well-grown faith; and both my *doctrinē* and *discourse* keep this in view; yet the nature and practice of a sinner's first address to Christ by faith, may be easily learnt hereby; as I shall shew hereafter.

To confirm and improve this doctrine, let us consider,

I. What it is that a *Christian* knows of Christ, that engages his trust and confidence?

II. What sort of knowledge it is? And how he comes by it? And

III. What useful Remarks may be drawn from this subject?

First, *What is it that a Christian knows of Christ, that engages his trust in him?*

The Answer may be comprised under these two general Heads; (*viz.*) The personal qualifications of Christ, and his special character, or commission, as one appointed to take care of souls.

1st, *A believer knows the particular and personal qualifications of Christ, which render him able to take care of what is committed to him.* Now these qualifications depend not only upon the constitution of his person, as one in whom God and man are united, but also upon the labours of his life, and the virtue of his sufferings, his death, his resurrection, and his exalted state. Let us descend a little into particulars upon this subject, and take a short and pleasurable survey how well our Lord is qualified to take the charge of souls, and of their eternal welfare.

1st, *He has almighty power,* and can secure whatsoever is committed to him, against all oppositions and dangers; for it is by him that God the Father created all things, and he hath sufficient influence over all the works of his hands; a divine ability to save his favourites, and destroy all that oppose: to en-
 safe them from every peril that arises from their own weakness, and defend them against every adversary that designs mischief. It was by him that our souls were formed at first in his own and his Father's image; and he can new-mould them into the same form, though it be quite defaced. What iniquity is there in nature, which such almighty grace cannot subdue? What wild imagination, or rebellious thought, in man, which a God cannot reduce to obedience? Should all the wicked of the earth conspire to ruin a Christian,
 what

what could the impotent malice of creatures avail, if the Creator forbid their violence; or if he who made them encompass the faint round as with a wall of brass, and cover him as with a shield? And what can Satan the tempter or the destroyer do, if Jesus hold him in his chain, and forbid him to come nigh the believer? The lion of the great deep cannot so much as roar, to affright the meanest lamb of the flock, without the permission of Christ their Shepherd. He can neither tempt us from our duties, nor rifle us of our comforts, if the Son of God command him to silence. And what are all the angels in heaven but the servants of Christ, *all ministering spirits, sent forth to secure them that are heirs of salvation?* Heb. i. 14. What is there within us, or without us, in heaven, earth, or hell, that can endanger our happiness, if he that is one with God, and almighty, undertake to save us? To him therefore we commit this great undertaking.

2dly, *He has inconceivable treasures of knowledge, and wisdom unsearchable.* He takes notice of the most secret and distant dangers to which his favourites can be exposed: Hell is naked before him, and the dark counsels of destruction have no covering: He confounds all the policies of darkness, and knows how to infatuate Satan, the most subtle spirit, when he contrives mischief against the saints. And when our own hearts, for want
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of foresight, run giddily, and wander into snares, he can surround us with divine light for the recovery of our wanderings, and guide us in a safe path homewards. The hidden workings of sin in the inmost chambers of the soul are open to his eyes, Heb. iv. 12, 13. And he knows how to prevent it from bringing forth fruit unto death.

But, on the other hand, his own counsels are laid unsearchably deep; nor can all hell fathom or undermine them. He is supposed to be represented under the character of *Wisdom*, shewing her power, Prov. viii. 14. 'Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am 'understanding; I have strength. He knows 'how to deliver the godly out of every temptation,' and to preserve them to his own kingdom. This glorious person is fit to be trusted with the infinite concerns of weak and ignorant creatures.

3dly, *His love and compassion, and willingness to take the charge of souls*, is equal to his wisdom and power. Though this be not expressed in the text, yet it is necessarily included; for how could the apostle say with joy, *I know whom I have trusted*, if he knew only that he was *able to save*, without believing him willing? Or why should St. Paul trust him with so valuable a thing as his eternal welfare, if he did not know him compassionate as well as mighty? But his willingness is abundantly evident by all that he

he did, and all that he suffered, to procure salvation for us; for he tells us, it was the very design of his coming, to *seek and save that which was lost*, Luke xix. 10. And he must be willing to keep that which he undertakes to seek and to save.

It was his love and willingness to take care of sinners, that brought him down from heaven to an incarnation, and veiled the dignity of his divine glory in the lowly and debased figure of a man, in the *likeness of sinful flesh*. A believer reads his willingness in the very features of his manhood; and every poor and painful circumstance of his life writes his love still in fairer characters. What mean all his labours and wearisome travels? His preachings and pleadings with obstinate men all the day, in towns and villages? And his midnight wrestlings with God upon the cold mountains? What mean his kind invitations, and his melting language, *Ho, every one that thirsteth, let him come unto me, and drink? Come unto me all ye that are weary, and I will give you rest? Come to the physician, ye that are sick, and I will heal you. Come, ye that are heavy laden, and I will release you. He that comes unto me shall in no wise be cast out.* What can be the design of all these tender expressions, but to acquaint us with his willingness to take care of those sinners that commit their souls to him? What means his submission to cruel sufferings, and
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to bitter reproaches? His agonies in the garden? The convulsions of his nature, and the tortures of his soul? Tortures that drew *cries and tears* from the Son of God? And *his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even to astonishment and death.* What do all those speak, if not love and willingness to save? What is the language of his arms, when spread naked on the cross, but “Come unto me, finners, and I will embrace you?” This is the voice of every wound of his body, while his breath expired amidst blood and groans. Nor can we understand any thing by all these scenes of wo, if we cannot read love in them, and a hearty willingness to secure believing sinners from the wrath to come.

4thly, *He hath perfect righteousness, and atoning blood.* So that the most guilty soul may trust him safely; for he has obeyed, and he has suffered: He has procured pardon for sin, and justification unto eternal life: He has made satisfaction for the vilest of crimes, and for the chief of finners. He has a human nature that could die, and the indwelling divinity, that could put infinite dignity into his death, and render it a full atonement for the heaviest guilt: He has paid our immense debts, and justice acknowledges the receipt in full: He has fulfilled the commands of God’s perfect law, which we could never fulfil: And he has bore the curse which would have made us for ever miserable: And
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all this not for himself, but in our stead; and that with this design, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law, and present us before God in his own righteousness, that we might receive the adoption of sons, and be for ever accepted in the Beloved, Gal. iii. 13. and iv. 5. Eph. i. 6. Here is an all-sufficient righteousness, in which the severe eye of the holiness of God can find no flaw or defect, which is the foundation of our hope; whereas our righteousnesses are mingled with many defilements. Here is a *righteousness that shall not be abolished*, though the heavens wear away, and the earth wax old. Therefore *the isles where sinners dwell shall wait upon him, and on his arm shall they trust*, Isa. li. 5, 6. It was the great business of the Messiah *to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness*, Dan. ix. 24. And this is of such necessity to our salvation, because of the perpetual frailties of our nature, that a poor trembling believer could not venture his soul safely into any hands but where such a glorious righteousness was found; and from this character our Saviour is pleased to take one of his honourable titles, Jer. xxiii. 6. *The Lord our righteousness.* Surely therefore, (saith a humble, convinced, and guilty wretch,) in such a one will I trust, for I have no merit in me to obtain pardon, I have no righteousness of my own to render me accepted with

God,

God, and I must for ever perish without it. *Surely in the Lord I shall find righteousness,* as well as wisdom *and strength,* Isa. xlv. 24. And to him I commit my soul.

5thly, *He has great interest with God the Father,* and always prevails when he pleads. *Father, I know that thou bearest me always,* John xi. 42. He never prays in vain, for he is ever worthy of the Father's ear. He appears in all the virtue of his original Sonship, even when he appears in the name of sinful worms; and when he pleads their cause before the throne, he does it in all the power of his meritorious righteousness, and with the cries of his dying blood. We might doubt of audience when we address ourselves to the great and dreadful God; for we are but his creatures, who have sinned against him, but he is the only begotten Son. We may well stand at a distance, and tremble, for we are rebels; but he is perfect in his loyalty and obedience. We are defiled, but he is pure and unspotted; we might expect thunder and destruction from the Almighty, for the Lord abhors all sin. For such guilty wretches to come before the face of God, though with groans and tears, would but set our rebellion and guilt before his eyes, awaken his wrath, and put him in mind of deserved vengeance; but when Christ appears as a petitioner, he is approved and heard: For he is the Son of his love, he is all holiness:

No man can come unto the Father but by him, John xiv. 6. Therefore we dare not trust ourselves in meaner hands. *He is able to keep what is committed to him unto the great day, and to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him; seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them; and is such an High-Priest as the Son of God, holy, harmless, and undefiled,* Heb. vii. 25, 26. He pleads for aliens and strangers, in the virtue of his Sonship; for criminals, in the efficacy of his obedience; and we joyfully commit ourselves, poor sinful and perishing strangers and criminals, to him, to be introduced into the Father's presence, because he has the most powerful influence, and the strongest interest in heaven.

6thly, *He lives for ever.* Rev. i. 18. *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I live for evermore.* Amen. He therefore that hath known death by experience, and now stands firmly possessed of eternal life, is the most proper person that I can trust with all my concerns, my flesh and spirit, for life and death, for time and eternity. Should I presume to make myself my own keeper, yet my utmost care could pretend to reach no further than the term of this life; for whether I go in death is all darkness to me, if I had not known *Christ* and his *gospel*, *who has brought life and immortality to light,* 2 Tim. i. 10.

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And notwithstanding all those discoveries of the future state, I am still incapable of providing for myself in the invisible world. My soul and body are then separated, and I cannot keep them together, nor take care of them apart. Where this world of souls is I know not, nor can I tell how to secure my best interest there, or direct myself in the right way to the region of sanctified spirits in that world, where I am so much a stranger; all the land of death is in a great measure the region of darkness still; it is a vast unknown country, and far the biggest part of it is a burning climate, a land of torment, sorrow, and despair; and there are a thousand roads that lead down to this gulph of wretchedness; and how shall my poor wandering soul, when dismissed from this flesh, find the way to the land of light, since I know not the paths, nor the dangers of the way, and there is no companion in death to guide me through the dark valley? How shall I dare to plunge into eternity, except some mighty friend be there to take care of me, and conduct me to the seat of the blessed?

But my Lord Jesus lives in that unseen world; he has passed through the region of death, and knows it well; he has the keys of death, and the separate state, and is acquainted with all the avenues of it; he is Governor of the land of blessedness, and the fittest Guardian to whom I can commit my departing

departing spirit. I leave also my poor remains of flesh to his care: These limbs I leave to moulder into dust, under the wakeful eye of his providence; for he is Lord of this lower world too, and he will raise my flesh to immortality, and rejoin it to my soul at the great day.

7thly, In the last place, I might add, *The faithfulness of Christ to fulfil all that he undertakes*, is another qualification that encourages our trust: His name is the *Amen, the faithful and the true*, Rev. iii. 14. *The Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil*; therefore (saith the apostle to the saints at Thessalonica,) *We have confidence in the Lord touching you*, 2 Theff. iii. 3, 4. His sincerity is above all possibility of being corrupted, and what he once designs he will accomplish: *Whom he loves, he loves to the end*, John xiii. 1. He is unchangeable in his compassion from the very truth of his nature; his zeal and watchfulness can never admit him to be forgetful one moment, of all the infinite concerns that a believer has intrusted with him. His faithfulness adds force and strength to all the encouragements that our faith receives from all the other qualifications of Christ; and, if I know all these excellencies are found in him, I am persuaded he is able and willing to save to the uttermost; and I leave my all with him till the last day.

Thus we have briefly run through the *personal qualifications* of Christ. But

Idly, Besides these his personal qualifications, which are the objects of a believer's knowledge, and the motives of his faith, there is another thing that engages his confidence in him; and that is, *his special character and commission as a Mediator, which he has received from the Father*, and which he has voluntarily undertaken to fulfil. Hereby he stands obliged to use all his personal abilities to take care of sinners that are committed to his charge. He often speaks of his being *sent from the Father to do his will*. See John vi. 39. 'And this is the Father's will
' that hath sent me, that of all which he hath
' given me I should lose nothing, but should
' raise it up again at the last day.'

By this commission Christ has a right and authority to exercise all his natural powers and capacities to secure the souls of believers. The justice, and wisdom, and holiness, as well as the grace and mercy of God the Father, joined to commit this authority into his hands. And it is in this sense that *all power in heaven and earth is given him*, Matt. xxviii. 13. *And he is Head over all things for the church*, Eph. i. ult. When we say, that all gifts and all graces are treasured up in the hands of Christ, to be communicated to his people, we mean, that as a commissioned Mediator, he has a rightful authority to exert
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all his natural and divine powers in the communication of gifts and graces, and holy influences of the Spirit; which power neither he nor his Father did think proper to be exerted, without satisfaction made for sin as Mediator.

Behold then our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary, and the Son of God; behold him in all the sufficiency of the united Godhead, and in all the glory and authority of his mediatorial commission, fully capacitated to keep whatsoever is committed to him! The believer sees this and rejoices; he beholds all the souls of sinners designed for salvation given into the hands of Christ by the Father, to keep; which Christ himself often speaks of, in the xvith and xviith chapters of the Gospel of St. John. And he reads those words of his Lord with abundant joy, 'My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand: I and my Father are one; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand,' John x. 28, 29, 30.

Now, says the believer, shall I not venture my eternal state in those hands where God himself has laid it? Shall I not chuse him to be my Guardian in this my weak and helpless state, whom the Father has appointed for this very purpose, and trusted with the care

of all his children? Who is so fit to be my shepherd as that glorious person to whom the Father has committed the charge of all his sheep? God the Father knows him well, that he is equal to the great undertaking, or else he would never have intrusted him with the souls of his chosen ones; and I through his grace have beheld such abilities, such love, and such faithfulness in him, that he is sufficient to answer the weighty charge; therefore I have intrusted him with my all, and *I know whom I have trusted.*

Besides, says the Christian, this is the person whom God has ordained to take care of his own infinite honours, as well as of the immortal concerns of men; and where can I trust my soul better than where the all-wise God has trusted all his own glory? The government of heaven and earth, of angels and men, is laid upon his shoulders, and of his dominion there is no bound, there is no end, Isa. ix. 6. The biggest affairs of kingdoms and nations, all the revolutions and concerns of the worlds of nature, grace, and glory, are committed to Christ the Mediator; *all things are delivered into his hands by the Father,* John iii. 35. And surely, saith the Christian, there is none like him to take care of my soul; since God himself, upon a survey of all the creation, found none like him; none so fit to be intrusted with all his own infinite concerns, in all the worlds which he
hath

hath made. *I know therefore whom I have believed, when I believed in Jesus, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.*

Secondly, After having discovered what it is that a *Christian knows of Christ, that engages his belief, and firm confidence;* we proceed to enquire, *What sort of knowledge this is, or how he comes to know him so as to trust in him, and rejoice in his faith?*

The *Answer* may be reduced to these two Heads: A believer that is arrived at such a knowledge of Christ, has obtained it partly by the *testimony* of others, and partly by his own *experience*.

1st, It is a *knowledge that arises from the testimony of others.* And this sort of knowledge is generally called *faith*; that is, the believing of any proposition upon the authority of those that relate it; and, according as the witnesses that make the report are more credible, and more numerous, so we give the firmer assent to their testimony; our faith grows so much the stronger, and our knowledge is the more certain. Now the witnesses that give evidence to the power and faithfulness of Christ our Saviour, are so gloriously credible in themselves, and so many in number, that a believer has the most rational and solid ground for his faith. Let us

take a short survey of these witnesses, and humbly examine their testimony.

God himself, the all-wise, the true, and the eternal God, in the person of *the Father*, has borne witness from heaven to his Son Christ Jesus in all ages. This he did in old time by visions and voices, by prophecies and holy institutions. It is of him that *God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began*, Acts iii. 21. What is the *seed of the woman*, that should *break the serpent's head*, Gen. iii. 15. but a promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour, given to Adam, to prevent his despair; and a testimony of his power to destroy the works of the devil, and to save fallen man? What is the *seed of Abraham, in whom all nations should be blessed*, Gen. xxii. 18. but a prophecy of the blessings of life and salvation to the nations of the earth, by Jesus the Son of Abraham? Who was *Shiloh*, of whom Jacob prophesied, *To him shall be the gathering of the people*, but Christ, who was sent of God, that the Gentiles might commit their souls into his hands, and join themselves to him as their Head and Governor?

It would be endless to run through all the messages from God, which the inspired prophets of old delivered to men, and which gave divine testimony to the Saviour that should be born. Who was the *Angel of the covenant*, that was sent to conduct the Jews through

through the wilderness, and to keep that nation, and to bring them safe to Canaan? Who was the *Captain of the Lord's host*, that was sent and appeared to Joshua, engaging for the protection of him and his army? What was the vision that appeared to Isaiah, the *Lord sitting upon a throne in much glory and power*, but so many prefigurations of the Son of God, that was to take our nature upon him, and become a Saviour? What were all these appearances of God in the form of man, but signs and pledges, and (as it were) essays towards his incarnation? What were the types of the Old Testament, but emblems of deliverance, atonement, and salvation, that were to be conferred by Christ upon those sinners that would trust him with their souls? What was *the ark* wherein Noah was saved, when he committed his life to the keeping of God in that floating house, amidst a flood of waters, but an assurance of safety to those sinners who make Christ their refuge, when the floods of divine wrath rise high? What was the design of the *bloody sacrifices*, the *sacrifices of expiation*, but to hold forth the method whereby Christ should secure guilty souls from death?

Time would fail me to speak of the brazen and the golden altar; of burning the flesh of beasts, and the smoking incense; of the ark of the covenant where the law was kept, and the cover of it, which was called the

mercy-seat, where the God of glory dwelt under the form of a bright cloud: Time would fail me to speak of the tabernacle of Moses, and the temple of Solomon; of the cities of refuge, appointed for the safety of casual murderers; of the high-priest, of his garments, and of his offices, who was to keep the names of the tribes of Israel upon his breast and upon his shoulder. These were all the institutions and appointments of God himself, to assure us by various carnal emblems of the fulness of that salvation by Jesus Christ; for which no single emblem was sufficient.

Let us descend to later times, and behold God the Father giving testimony to his Son, by kindling a new star in the heavens at his birth, and sending it as a guide to lead the wisemen from the east, and from the rising sun, to a greater and sweeter light, the Morning Star, and the Sun of Righteousness. He sent a voice from heaven at his baptism, and pronounced in distinct language, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* Twice more did he speak from heaven, and with an audible voice, in the time of the life of Christ, attest this mission: A believer knows many of these things, and receives the testimony of God. And *this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son, that eternal life is in him,* 1 John v. 9, 11.

Christ

Christ himself is another witness that testifies his own ability to save sinners, and keep what is committed to him. John viii. 18. ‘I am one that bear witness of myself; and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.’ And though he bear record of himself, yet his record is true and credible; for he came from heaven, and was made man in an extraordinary way; and he rose again after death, and ascended to heaven; which seems to be the meaning of those words, ‘For I know whence I came, and whither I go;’ which are brought as a reason of the truth of his testimony, John viii. 14. He appeared amongst men with all the undisputed signs of the Messiah upon him; and the doctrines that he preached, and the miracles that he wrought, and the convulsions of nature at his death, and the wonders of his resurrection, all agree to confirm the mission of Christ, and his ability to save. A Christian beholds the Son of God coming from the dead, with this message to him: “I am able to deliver from death those that believe in me; to keep their souls safe in my hand, and to raise their bodies up to life everlasting: For, behold, *I was dead, and am alive; and live for evermore.* Amen.”

Or shall I rather say, that the miracles of Christ were the *testimonies which the Holy Spirit* gave to the mission of Christ, the Son of God? For they are sometimes in scripture ascribed

ascribed to the Spirit, Matt. xii. 28. ‘I cast out devils by the Spirit of God.’ And one of the three witnesses in heaven to the gospel of Christ is the Spirit of God, 1 John v. 6, 7. ‘It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.’ That Spirit and power by which he opened the eyes of the blind, made the lame to walk, and the dead to rise, does effectually attest his power to take care of those that are intrusted with him: For these wonders were wrought with a design to confirm this doctrine; and upon this account Christ is said to be *justified in or by the Spirit*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. His commission was sealed, and his authority attested by these mighty works of the blessed Spirit.

Thus the believer has a threefold witness from heaven, to give him the knowledge of Christ, and to confirm his faith; and this is abundantly sufficient to justify his trust in Christ Jesus.

But he has many other witnesses also to the same truth: He can call all the holy prophets and saints since the world began, to bring in their witness, who told of the power of Christ to save, in dark speeches, when they lived in this world, and now find themselves safe in his hands in the world of light. A believer can call the noble company of apostles, the holy army of martyrs and confessors, to attest the same doctrine; who, through terrible temptations of Satan, and the wrath
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of man; who, through fires and waters, and many deaths, have committed their souls to his divine keeping, and found them in safety beyond the grave.

The believer can add the testimony of all his fellow-faints now living, who, by venturing their eternal concerns into the hands of Christ, have found safety and rest, strength against sin, and peace of conscience; divine joy, courage against sufferings, and triumphs in the midst of dangers. They all with one voice cry out, “Not unto ourselves, not unto
“ourselves, but to thy name be all the glory;
“for thy grace has kept us since we committed
“ourselves unto thee; and not one of us
“is lost; and we continue to trust our all
“with thee till the great day; and we are
“assured of safety, though our dangers are
“infinite.”

You see here what a rational and solid foundation a Christian has for his knowledge of Christ, and his faith in him. It is built upon testimonies so numerous, so credible, and so divine; well might the apostle say, *I know whom I have trusted*: And he becomes a witness to us even to the end of the world, to direct souls to the same refuge. When a sinner is awakened to see his dreadful guilt, and danger for eternity, and is making earnest enquiry, *What shall I do for my soul?* Where shall I trust it, that it may be kept safe for ever? Let his eye be directed

to this able and all-sufficient Saviour, by so long a train of witnesses, and the Holy Spirit with them, and he can no longer doubt whether to apply himself, or to whose hands he should betrust his eternal concerns.

Idly, *The knowledge that a believer has of Christ's ability to save, arises not only from the witness of others, but from his own inward and sensible experience.* The apostle speaks here not as a young believer, but as one that had known Christ long, had long trusted him, and gained daily confirmations of his faith, as was hinted before. Though a sinner at first is drawn to Christ by the report that is made of him by others, either by his education, by reading or hearing the word, or by holy conference; yet afterwards he grows up to an establishment and assurance of faith by the sweet experience he has had of what Christ has done for him; and he saith to his minister, and to his fellow-christian, and to the apostles, and the prophets, as all the neighbours said to the woman of Samaria, John iv. 42. 'Now we believe, not merely because of this saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know indeed that this is the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

I am well satisfied that it is from this sort of knowledge, as well as the former, it is from experience as well as faith, that so many saints have been able to assume the words of my text, and to triumph in the approaches

approaches of death. For though they may have learned the knowledge of Christ, and his ability to save, and that from their earliest youth, by the pious instructions of their parents, by the ministry of their teachers, and much converse with the holy scriptures, yet they have a more large and confirmed knowledge of Christ, from the many sensible effects of his love and power upon their souls, and from their constant converse with him by meditation and prayer, both in their secret retirement, and in their daily walk with God. They can say from a sweet and rich experience, perhaps from their youngest years, and downwards, to maturer age, *I know whom I have believed.*

I know my conscience was burdened with guilt, and I could find no relief till I saw the cross of Christ, and carried my guilty conscience thither; the man that hung upon the tree took my burden off, sprinkled me with his own blood, and undertook to secure me from the wrath of God for ever. I know who it was that relieved me from these terrors, and I rejoice in his atonement.

I had no righteousness to appear in before a pure and a holy God, and I had just reason to dread his presence as a consuming fire; but the same glorious person put a complete righteousness upon me, through faith, whereby I can stand before a just God, with humble confidence;

confidence; and I know and adore *the Lord my righteousness*.

My nature was all corrupted, my sins were strong, I had no power to think or to do that which was good; and I know whose grace it was that renewed all my nature, that formed my soul to religious thoughts, that set me upon the work of mortification, and assisted me in those divine labours. I remember what powerful seeds of vanity were found in my heart; and if I had not given up the garden to Christ's keeping, it had been all overrun with weeds, and neither fruit nor flower had ever appeared there.

When I met with temptations I found myself a very unequal match for them; for I was by nature all weakness; but by the knowledge of Christ I have obtained strength: I have often found *his grace sufficient for me*, and *his strength made perfect in my infirmity*: I know by whose power it is, that I stand; and *I am persuaded that he* that has kept me hitherto, *is still able to save me from falling*: I have tried his grace so often, and found it sufficient hitherto, that I will trust him for what remains. I have committed my soul therefore to his keeping till the day of my death, till the great day of my resurrection. And we who are alive believe concerning those that are gone, that our blessed Lord has fulfilled a great part of his trust; has introduced their spirits into the presence of the
Father,

Father, with exceeding joy; and will fulfil the design of his love, when the dead shall arise to complete glory.

Thus I have endeavoured to make it appear, that *a believer knows so much of the person of Christ, of his qualifications for a Saviour, and his divine commission for this purpose, as to engage his trust and confidence in him:* And he obtains this knowledge by *testimonies* of sufficient evidence; and by his *own experience* he confirms his faith. The *Reflections* that attend this subject will compose the next Discourse.

DISCOURSE X.

FAITH built on KNOWLEDGE.

PREACHED 1711.

The Second Part of this SERMON.

2 Tim. i. 12.

— *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, against that day.*

THOUGH the Redeemer was gone to the invisible world, and St. Paul never knew him while he was on earth, yet he was no stranger to him when he wrote this Epistle. Christ is unseen to men, but not unknown to the believer. The apostle was so well acquainted with the person and the commission of Christ, that he could venture
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all into his hands to the day of judgment; he could look forward to that day with divine pleasure, and rejoice in the midst of present sufferings, upon the assurance of his future safety.

From the example of this great and holy man in my text, I have drawn this Observation.

Doct. *A Christian lays a solid foundation for his faith and joyful hope in the knowledge of Christ Jesus, in whom he trusts.*

Here I have shewn at large what it is of Christ that a Christian is acquainted with, in order to trust him. Besides the wondrous constitution of this person, as a man, in whom dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily, many glorious and all-sufficient qualifications of a Mediator are found in him. Ye have heard how great and how good, how wise and how faithful, he is; how well fitted to undertake the salvation of the guilty, because he hath provided an atonement and complete righteousness; how well furnished to take the charge of bringing sinners to a state of grace and holiness, because he hath the fulness of the Spirit in him, to communicate to men, in order to renew their natures, and fit them for heaven. I have shown what a commission he received from the Father, to undertake the great work of the salvation of men; and thereby, as he hath a natural power, so he hath a legal authority

to take the charge of souls that are committed to him. O the glorious furniture of the great Mediator! O the divine commission that gives security to faith! How happily are they joined in Jesus the Lord! And how much doth the knowledge of this conduce to a believer's comfort.

I have also shown at large, in the second place, how a Christian comes by this knowledge: He has abundant testimony to the truth of all these things from heaven and from earth: God himself hath given witness from heaven, by miracles, visions, and voices: The apostles, prophets, and martyrs, have filled the earth with their witness; and, by most convincing arguments, have proved the all-sufficiency of Christ to save. The believer hath a witness in his own soul, to the power and grace of Christ, when he feels holiness wrought in his heart by the gospel, and divine peace in his conscience, with the foretastes of heaven.

Now from such a knowledge, derived from scripture and inward experience, he grows up to a holy courage in believing; he can venture his immortal concerns with assurance into the hands of Christ; he is bold, and triumphs in his faith, and can suffer for it without being ashamed.

Thus having briefly recalled the doctrinal part, I proceed now to the last thing I proposed;

posed; and that was, to attempt some useful Remarks on this subject or Discourse.

1st Remark. Here we may learn *the true nature of saving faith in Christ.* It is a *committing of the soul into the hands of Christ, from a due knowledge of his person, and his power to save.* It is true, that my text is not the mere language of a young and feeble faith, but the divine oratory of holy confidence, joy, and triumph; yet the nature of saving faith is so fully comprised, and so plainly expressed in it, that I have often thought I know not any one single verse in the whole Bible, that gives us so clear and distinct an account of this grace. By the words of my text it is rendered as intelligible as love, or hope, or fear, or almost any of the common actions of life or religion.

It is a committing or trusting of the soul to Christ for complete salvation, flowing from a sense of our sin and misery; a knowledge of his personal qualifications, and his divine commission; or a persuasion of his ability and willingness to keep what is thus committed to him to the day of final judgment.

Saving faith is not a feeble belief of the words, or works, or power of Christ, upon a short hearsay and slight notice, but it is built upon knowledge and just evidence. It is not a mere doctrinal and historical assent to the truths which our Saviour spoke; nor

is it a mere rational conviction by the best arguments, that Christ is furnished with such abilities to save: It is not a sudden fit of desire, or hope, or well-wishing to our souls to be saved by Christ; nor is it a rash and bold presumption that Christ will save me, and make me happy: But it is *a solemn trusting of my soul into his hands for salvation, built upon a deep sense of my own sin and danger; a solid knowledge of his sufficient furniture for such an undertaking; and an earnest desire to be made partaker of this salvation, in the full nature of it, both the holiness and the joy.*

Saving faith therefore supposes and implies in it *a lively sense of the guilt of our sins, and the eternal misery that is like to ensue; a sight of the just vengeance of God to which we are exposed, and how incapable we are to make atonement for ourselves, or procure pardon; a sense of our want of a perfect righteousness to justify us before God, and how impossible it is for us to make one out of our own works and duties; for why should we trust another to do that which we can do for ourselves.*

It supposes also *a sight of the corruption of our natures, our perpetual tendency to fresh iniquity, and our weakness to perform the duties of life or religion; our natural delight in sin and the creature, and our natural aversion to God, and all that is holy; together with our utter incapacity of enjoying heaven whilst*
we

we are in this temper, and our impotence to change our own natures, and turn our souls from earth to heaven.

It supposes and implies *a painful sense of our having offended God, and weariness of this state of sin, and a hearty willingness to be delivered from it*: For why should we seek after the knowledge of such an almighty Friend and Saviour, if we were not fearful of eternal misery without one? Or why should we concern ourselves about a person that can subdue sin in us, if we are not so far made willing to part with it, as to have our natures reformed into holiness? And let it be observed, that this painful sense, this inward weariness of the power and reign of sin in us, and this desire of deliverance from it, is the most essential part of *true repentance*, or the conversion of the soul from sin to God.

It includes, in the next place, *a sight and belief of the all-sufficiency of Christ to supply our wants*; that there is atonement in him for our sins, and pardon procured by him; that there is righteousness with him for our justification and acceptance to eternal life; and all this by the means of his perfect obedience and death: That there is power and grace in him to conquer all our sins, to suppress temptations, to reform our vicious appetites, to incline our wills to God, to strengthen our endeavours for the practice of all holiness; to keep us in the favour and

in the image of God, and conduct us safe to heaven; and that he is appointed by the Father to do all this for sinners.

It consists formally in *a committing of the guilty and sinful soul to the care of Christ*, according to his Father's commission to take care of lost souls, and to keep that which is committed to him. It is a secret address of the heart unto Christ, whereby we resign our guilty persons to him, to be pardoned for the sake of his sufferings; our unrighteous souls to be accepted through his righteousness; our sinful and polluted natures to be sanctified by the power of his grace, and to be preserved safe to death and glory.

After all this, there follows *an acquiescence, or rest of the soul in Christ*, which he promised, when he called the *weary and the heavy-laden sinners to come to him*, Matth. xi. 28. And this is accompanied with a good hope and expectation of all this salvation from Christ, for which the sinner trusts in him: And this excites his love and thankfulness to Christ, and awakens all his endeavours to a warm pursuit of heaven in the path of holiness, in which God hath appointed us to walk to the kingdom. Thus every divine promise, every threatening and every command, obtains a due authority over the heart, under the vital influence of such a faith. This is not *a lazy and a slothful confidence*, that casts away all care by throwing it on Christ, and walks in

a secure and bold neglect of duty: For a believer well knows that he is bound to take the utmost care of his own soul, to work out his salvation with holy fear, to watch against temptation, to resist every rising sin, and persevere to the death; though, from a sense of his own insufficiency, he builds his safety and hope on the all-sufficiency of Christ.

Let it be observed here, that it is not necessary that all these several workings of the heart should be plain, and distinct, and sensible, in every act of faith, nor in every true believer: For the actions of the soul, and especially the springs, and the motives, and designs of those actions, are so hidden, and so mingled with each other, that they are not all distinctly perceived even in the soul, where they are transacted. When the jailor cried out, ‘What shall I do to be saved;’ Acts xvi. 30. or when the poor man in the Gospel, Mark ix. 24. said, ‘Lord, I believe; help my unbelief;’ there were a multitude of crowding thoughts and passions that produced and mingled with those ideas and expressions of fear and faith, which could never be distinctly apprehended and recounted by the persons that felt them. But this I say, that most, or all the particulars I have mentioned, seem to be necessary in the very nature of a true and saving faith in Christ, where the gospel is known and preached so clearly as it is in our times, and must be

pre-supposed or involved, and secretly included, in the very act of believing unto eternal life. It is a committing the soul to the care of Christ, from such motives, and with such designs, as I have described.

This account of *soving faith* guards it against all the mistakes of the age, and secures it against all the inroads of error on either side. A Christian that takes in all these views, will not easily be led away by the Popish, or any other doctrine, where faith is supposed to be a *mere assent to the revelations of the gospel*, nor will he be ensnared by the unwary expressions of some great writers, that faith is a *full persuasion of our own salvation*; which has given too much countenance to Antinomian follies.

He that has this knowledge and this belief which I have described, and does thus heartily commit his soul to Christ, shall in no wise be cast out, and can never miscarry; but by repeated exercises of this faith, and humble watchfulness in walking with God, he shall grow rich in experience, and shall learn to say with triumph, *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able, &c.*

II^d Remark. We may infer from this Discourie, *the great value of a solid and regular knowledge of the person of Christ and his gospel*; It lays a good foundation for our first faith, and afterwards for its growth to a
steady

steady assurance. When we well *know whom we have believed*, we believe with a firmer confidence, and with boldness we commit our infinite concerns into the hands of a person of whose ability and faithfulness we are well persuaded; at first, by a distinct knowledge of his gospel, and afterwards, by an experimental acquaintance with his power and grace. Our hope in his salvation is hereby better established, and our hearts grow fearless. Such a hope is an anchor that loses not its hold in the wildest storms, and makes the vessel ride in safety.

What is the reason of the perpetual doubts and despondencies of some Christians, that have made a long profession of the gospel? Whence is it that they are alarmed at every turn, and tremble, as though all were lost? How comes it to pass, that these hurries of mind should return so often, and almost overwhelm some pious souls, that walk watchfully and humbly with God? Is it not because their faith has been too much built upon sudden and warm affections, without so solid a ground of regular knowledge? When persons of a weaker mind have felt a strong and divine impression from some particular scripture, or from some bright sentence in a sermon, which hath displayed the grace and salvation of Christ, they have made this inward sensation the ground of their hope; they have fed still upon this cordial, and lived

lived upon this support. And whensoever these warm impressions return, they trust in Christ afresh, and rejoice sensibly in his salvation: But they can hardly give a rational account what their faith is, or why they believe; and when these extraordinary supplies fail them, they sink, and tremble, and die.

I confess, if this faith change their natures, purify their hearts from the love of sin, and make them walk in holiness, far be it from me to suspect the truth of it. But this I must say, that such souls are in danger of perpetual disquietudes, ready to be shaken by every wind, and exposed to every gloomy temptation: When the flashes of light are gone, they are all darkness and terror, because they cannot render a reason of the hope that was in them, from a distinct acquaintance with the person in whom they had fixed their hope, or from his rich ability to save.

It is not a piece of wisdom in natural things to trust a man with affairs of importance before we know him; or if we do, every little dark circumstance, every flying report, will be ready to shake our hearts, and fill us with fear; though perhaps our concerns may be safe in his hands. And it is not a piece of holy wisdom to trust Christ himself infinitely, and yet be contented to know him but a very little. Such souls may be safe at last, because the Lord, whom they trust, is honest and faithful; but they expose themselves to many fears,

fears, and frequent torments of mind, all the time of their absence from him. Let Athenians build their altars to the unknown God; but a Christian should not trust in an unknown Saviour.

Let us all be persuaded then to learn much of Christ, that with honour and wisdom we may trust him much; that we may venture our all for eternity into his hands, and rest securely upon well-known power and faithfulness. 'They that know thy name,' O God our Saviour, 'will put their trust in thee,' Psa. ix. 10. There is a noble instance of holy prudence in a well-built and well-settled faith. Let us not fancy that we know Christ enough, when we have attained merely such a degree of knowledge as is absolutely necessary for conversion, or so much as is sufficient to make a profession of his name, and thereby obtain a right to the fellowship of the saints. Let us not be content to be always babes, feeble and fearful because unknowing: We should think no pains too much to acquire divine knowledge, and to improve it: And to this end, let the holy scriptures be our daily study, for these are the writings that testify of Christ. Let us not censure the preachers that feed us with a word of knowledge, nor complain of dry discourses, when in any particular sermon, the doctrines of religion are chiefly insisted on; for these are the foundation of our wisest faith,

faith, and the pillars of solid and exalted joy. It was knowledge that carried the great apostle into that ecstasy of pleasure, and divine mortification to every thing besides Christ. Phil. iii. 8, 9. ‘ Yea, doubtless, I count all
 ‘ things but loss, for the excellency of the
 ‘ knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for
 ‘ whom I have suffered the loss of all things,
 ‘ and count them but dung, that I might be
 ‘ found in him,’ &c.

Seek after experimental acquaintance with Christ. Follow the advice of St. Peter, 2 Pet. iii. 18. ‘ Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus.’ This is attained by much converse with him, in meditation and prayer; by secret and hourly addresses to him; by frequent breathings of soul towards our heavenly friend, in whose hands lie all our immortal concerns. Make daily observations of the work and power of his grace upon your hearts, in your performance of duties, and success against temptations; and *have a care that you lose not the things which ye had wrought*: Take heed lest you decline in your acquaintance with Christ; that your faith and hope being built upon a regular knowledge, you may have a blessed treasure of Christian experiences to establish and exalt it.

III^d Remark. *How unkind and unnatural is it for parents to let the souls of their children perish for want of knowledge! How necessary*
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to acquaint them betimes with the gospel of Christ, that they may trust in him betimes, and that their souls may be safe in the great day! If I should ask every mother in the assembly this question, Do you not desire all your children should be young believers? But how can they believe in him whom they have not known? How can you expect they should trust in any person, if you have never brought them into his acquaintance? Or will you content yourselves that you give them the name of Christians in baptism, and let them know nothing of Christ?

Think it not enough therefore to make them repeat the words of a Catechism, but enquire what they mean by such and such words and sentences, which they pronounce; and thus you will discover where their ignorance lies: Then inform them, and assist their young understandings. Acquaint them with the sin of their natures, with the sins of their life, with the anger of God, and danger of hell; till they are afraid of it in earnest, and ask, *What they shall do to be saved?* Then teach them the knowledge of Christ, in his glorious person; in his excellent qualifications of love, power, and faithfulness; teach them the doctrine of his death as a satisfaction for sin, and of that all-sufficient righteousness, upon which only they can find acceptance with a just and a holy God: Acquaint them with his pleading in heaven as a Priest, for sinners

finners here on earth, and his reigning there as King, to give grace and holiness, pardon and repentance, and salvation, to all that are willing to accept it in his own way. And let this practice be continually repeated, till, by frequent enquiries, you find they understand what you teach them.

Show them how to commit their souls into the hands of Christ by prayer and faith, and how to walk watchfully in obedience to all the commands of Christ, to practise the duties of religion toward God, and the duties of morality toward men; in order to evidence their faith, and to bring them onward to complete salvation. Tell them of the last great judgment-day, when all their secret actions shall be brought to light before God, angels, and men; and when they must give an account to Jesus the Judge, of all their behaviour here. Make it evident, that there is no way to appear with safety before him as a Judge, but by committing their souls to him, as their kind and all-sufficient friend: And then holy parents may hope to meet their sons and their daughters with comfort, at the right hand of the Lord in that day.

It is an acquaintance with such a Saviour, and such a trust in him, that will prepare them not only for the last judgment, but for every circumstance of life, and the various changes they may pass through in the day of
their

their pilgrimage; and it will fit them for an early or an aged death.

If they should be exalted to riches or honour in the world, such a faith will be of abundant use and safety to them, that the keeping of their souls was committed in their younger days to the care of Christ; and they will carry their profession and their conversation unspotted with the world, through ten thousand snares attending such circumstances, by the influence of such a faith.

If they fall under various and heavy afflictions in the several stages of their life, it will be their perpetual relief, that all their concerns are in the hands of a merciful and a faithful High-Priest, who himself has suffered in the flesh, and knows how to pity them that suffer. When the tumults of sorrow gather together, and the waves rise high, to distract and overwhelm their spirits, they will find many an hour of sweet serenity and calmness, by having committed themselves to that Jesus, who can say to the waves, *Peace, and be still.*

But this leads me to the next Inference.

IVth Remark. We may infer from this Discourse, *How well God has provided for the safety and comfort of believers.* For their *safety*, because he has set up and appointed a person so able to take care of their souls; and for their *comfort*, because he gives them such

a knowledge of him in his own word, and by their own spiritual observation. It is this knowledge, this faith, and holy confidence, in the power and faithfulness of Christ, that prepares the soul for all accidents in the natural and spiritual life; it is this gives the Christian his support and comfort under every change of circumstances; and makes him valiant, and ready to meet them all.

Shall we run through a few of these seasons briefly?

In times of abounding error, when the gospel of Christ is corrupted, the believer *gives diligence to reading*, that he may *hold fast the form of sound words*; he prays for the enlightening Spirit to confirm him in the truth; but he rejoices in this, that his soul is in the hands of Christ, who will not suffer him to be seduced into damnable heresies, but will secure him from every fatal mistake.

Under the violent temptations of Satan, it is a support to the faint, that the powers of hell are all led captive, and trodden under foot by him who is the Guardian of his eternal welfare: He knows that his Lord will *save him from the mouth of the lion*; will *deliver him from every evil work*; and will *preserve him to his heavenly kingdom*, 2 Tim. iv. 17.

Under a sense of fresh guilt, and *sins of daily infirmity*, the Christian mourns bitterly because of his failings and follies, but hopes for security from ruining transgressions, and
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the unpardonable sin; because the virtue of the atonement in which he trusts is eternal: Christ has undertaken to preserve him from final apostasies, though the best of saints are not secured here from the workings of sin.

And *under these discomposures of mind, and the frequent vexations and uneasinesses in the things of this life*, that may ruffle their tempers, had it not been for their acquaintance with Christ, they had been sometimes utterly overcome; but how often have they retired into their closets, and left the tumult of their thoughts behind them in the world, while they went to converse with him by prayer, who had the care of their spiritual concerns? Or, at least, they have cried unto the Lord because of those uneasy companions; have shook them off in his presence with holy anger, and returned into the world again with serenity in their countenance, and victory and peace in their souls. This strength they derive from their blessed Lord, whom they have chosen for their divine Guardian.

Under the weakness of our graces, and the inconstancy of our tempers, it is a matter of relief to an humble saint, that the keeper of his soul is compassionate, and pities his frailties; is almighty, and will strengthen him under his weaknesses; is unchangeable, *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*. The lambs of his flock are weak, and cannot follow him in some rugged and difficult paths;

then he *gathers the lambs with his arms, and carries them in his bosom*, Isa. xl. 11. And there are some of the sheep of his fold that are ready to straggle into forbidden ways, to wander abroad, and lose themselves in the wilderness: But the *Lord is their Shepherd, he restoreth their souls, and leads them again into the way of righteousness, for his name's sake*, Psal. xxiii. 3.

In an hour of desertion, when God has withdrawn his joys, when the light of his countenance is concealed, and darkness lies upon the spirit, the believer holds fast his hope, though his rejoicings are interrupted; for he has committed his soul to the care of Christ, who has full interest with the Father, and can prevail for the recovery of his joys again. While *he walks in darkness, and has no light of comfort*, still he can *trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God*, Isa. l. 10.

Under sickness, and pains of nature, that threaten a dissolution of the body, the pillow of a believer lies easy under his head; for his soul, his dearest part, is in safe keeping, and cannot perish. Amidst all the languishings of nature, we have often heard the triumphs of grace from the mouth of a lively Christian. “*If I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for my Almighty Friend is with me*, Psal. xxiii. 4. *I know that if the tabernacle of this earthly house be dissolved, I have a building*
of

“ of God, a house not made with hands, eternal
 “ in the heavens. There is a mansion above
 “ prepared for me by him, who has the care
 “ of my eternity. He went up on high, on
 “ purpose to prepare a place, and he will come
 “ again, and take me to himself; that where
 “ he is, there I may be also; if it were not so,
 “ he would have told me; for I know whom
 “ I have trusted; and whither he is gone I
 “ know, and the way I know, 2 Cor. v. 1.
 “ John xiv. 2, 3, 4.”

Upon this view and assurance, the dying faint attempts the praises of his Lord, and practises something like the worship of heaven before-hand: *To him that is able to keep me from falling, and will present me faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. Jude 24, 25.*

Vth Remark. See whence ariseth the divine and amazing courage that some Christians have expressed under the foulest reproaches and sharpest sufferings for the sake of the gospel. This holy fortitude springs from a good acquaintance with the person of Christ, and a full persuasion of his ability to save. When we are ignorant, and in the dark, we are afraid of every thing, but courage is the effect of light and knowledge. A faith that is well-founded on a due knowledge of Christ, can raise the suffering Christian above the

power of shame and fear. And I chuse to make this Remark a distinct Head of discourse, because it is the very occasion on which the apostle introduces the words of my text. *Christ has abolished death, ver. 10. He has brought life and immortality to light by the gospel:* This I am well acquainted with, saith the apostle; for this very person, even Christ, my Lord *has appointed me a preacher of this doctrine: For which cause I also suffer.—Nevertheless I am not ashamed: For I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

It is a point of folly for a man to expose himself to reproach, and pain, and death, without any solid reason, or just hope of recompense. But St. Paul was no fool, when he was ready to be bound and die for the name of Christ; for he looked forward to the last great day, he saw his immortal interest safe under the care of Christ, whom he had well known and trusted; and therefore he had good reason to venture all on earth for the sake of such a friend in heaven. He saw the recompense secure in the hands of Christ; and therefore, (says he) “ *I am not ashamed of my sufferings, nor of my faith. Let my persecutors destroy this flesh, but they cannot touch my soul; for it is in safe hands: I know where I have trusted it. Let the Jews or the Romans* “ kill

“ kill this body, but it shall be raised up
 “ again at the great day, by his power, to
 “ whom I have committed my all for *here*
 “ and for *hereafter*; for he is able to expel
 “ death from his possessions, and make the
 “ grave restore all its prisoners. I know his
 “ power to subdue all things to himself. Let
 “ them load me with shame and reproaches
 “ now, but I shall look them in the face in
 “ that day with courage; and they shall
 “ tremble, and be confounded with everlast-
 “ ing shame. They may deprive me of a
 “ mortal life, and all that belongs to it; but
 “ they cannot rob me of a blessed immorta-
 “ lity; for the Lord of life hath taken charge
 “ of that important concern; and I am as-
 “ sured he is able to keep it. None can pluck
 “ me out of his hand: He will present me
 “ safe before his Father in that day, and
 “ make it appear with divine evidence, that
 “ the *light afflictions which I suffer now are*
 “ *not worthy to be compared with the glory*
 “ *that is then to be revealed.* He puts me
 “ into the same promise with himself; *If I*
 “ *suffer with him, I shall also reign with him:*
 “ And his promises are an eternal security.
 “ *I know whom I have believed.*” Thus you
 see what a glorious encouragement may be
 assumed from such an acquaintance with
 Christ, to endure the cross, and despise the
 shame, for the sake of Christ and his gospel.

I grant there have been weak Christians of lower degrees of knowledge, that have borne sufferings and martyrdom with a courage beyond all expectation. There have been some babes in Christ, that could not dispute for the truth, yet they could die for it. But let it be noted, that such persons have had generally but small advantage for improvement in knowledge; either they were young converts, or had but mean natural parts, or a poor education; yet a sincere zeal for their Lord: And perhaps also they had a bright and strong experimental knowledge of the gospel, by its sweet and sanctifying influences. Now when such as these have been called out by providence to bear a testimony to the truth, they have had *a mouth and wisdom given them immediately* from heaven, *which all their adversaries have not been able to gainsay, nor resist*: And this, according to the promise made to the apostles, in their infancy of understanding, Luke xxi. 15. They have been upheld under their torments by the arms of Christ, and by his sensible presence: Their divine fortitude hath been all inspiration. But you that have fair and daily opportunities for a large acquaintance with the gospel, have no reason to expect such miracles for your assistance in our day, if ye refuse the appointed means of hearing, reading, and meditation.

Take

Take this further advice also along with you: *While you are treasuring up truth, seek after holiness, and every grace.* See to it, that all the knowledge you gain by these methods be wrought into your very souls, and that you experience the sanctifying and comforting power of these truths on your consciences, your passions, and your lives. Divine truth, thus turned into spiritual nourishment, gives a vital strength for service and suffering. When you have the *word of God* in your mouths, as the *sword of the Spirit*, Eph. vi. 14, &c. the *breast-plate of righteousness* to cover your hearts, *the hope of salvation as a helmet* on your heads, and *the shield of faith* to ward off every dart; you are then best furnished to resist unto death.

But I would here chide the ignorant and the lazy Christian. What will you do when ye shall be assaulted with the witty reproaches of the Heathens of our age, those apostates from Christianity? When they shall laugh at you for a fool, because you profess to be a believer, and they think they have reason to laugh, if you can give no reason why you believe? What will you say, when they shall tell you the gospel of Christ is but a fable, and endeavour to scoff you out of your faith? When they shall ridicule you for paying the honours of a God to a poor man, that was hanged upon a tree in Jerusalem, and hath been dead and buried seventeen hundred years

ago? What will you say, when they shall ask you, how you can imagine that this man was the Son of God? Or the scriptures are of divine original? Will you answer as a Papist does, "I believe it because the church believeth it?" Or will you reply with the Turk, "I believe in Christ (as the Turk doth in Mahomet) because the whole nation believeth?" Or will you give the answer of a child, "I believe the Bible is the word of God, because my mother told me so?" But how unworthy is this of a person that professes to be a Christian, and is grown to full years of maturity? How ridiculous is it for a man to believe, and he knows not why? A man that hath had a thousand advantages to get his faith well-grounded, and to learn the reason of the hope that is in him?

Besides, How will you be able to stand in such an hour of temptation? Perhaps you will lose your faith, and all your religion. A bold jest, or a fair shew of argument, may make so deep an impression on a weak and unfurnished mind, as to give a sudden inlet to the tempter; and your soul may be filled with doubts and suspicions of Christianity: Then from one degree of unbelief you may be led on to another, till you have *made shipwreck of the faith and a good conscience too.* Thus you will part with all your hopes of immortality and heaven, for want of a well-grounded knowledge of the person in whom you profess to trust.

But

But further; if persecution should grow sharp, and days of torment and martyrdom return again, how would you be able to resist unto blood, and to bear the fiery trial, for the sake of a Saviour that you have not much acquaintance with? How could you hold out in this conflict till the death, if you have but little knowledge and little experience of that gospel which promiseth a crown of life? Would such ignorance as your's is endure to be plundered and banished? To be scourged and buffeted? To be fastened to the chains of a galley-slave, or to die by lingering tortures? Do you think you could bear what our neighbours and brethren in France have endured upon the account of your faith, and yet have no better reason to give for it? You will make but a poor confessor or martyr, if you can say no more for Christianity than an Heathen can say for his national religion? If you have no more to plead in defence of the blessed Jesus, than a native of Morocco hath for his prophet Mahomet; a man of Ephesus for his goddess Diana; or a citizen of Athens for his *unknown God*.

Attend therefore to the advice of the apostle Peter, 1st epistle, 3d chapter, ver. 14, 15.
 ‘ But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake,
 ‘ happy are ye; and be not afraid of their
 ‘ terror, neither be troubled; but be ready
 ‘ always to give an answer to every man that
 ‘ asketh you a reason of the hope that is in
 ‘ you

‘you with meekness and fear:’ And again I would put you in mind how he concludes his second epistle, and what direction he gives even to those who had some good knowledge of Christianity; that you may be secured from the growing apostasy of the age. Ver. 17, 18. ‘Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing
 ‘ye know these things before, beware lest ye
 ‘also being led away with the error of the
 ‘wicked, fall from your own steadfastness:
 ‘But grow in grace, and in the knowledge
 ‘of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’

With Remark. *This doctrine relieves our sorrows at the death of our pious relatives* ; for we know to whom they had intrusted their souls.* We are in no pain or jealousy about their eternal state; for when they leave us and this world, they have parted indeed with their friends on earth, but it is to dwell with a better friend: For this is the design of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of his powerful prayer, John xvii. 24. ‘Father, I will that those
 ‘whom thou hast given me be with me
 ‘where I am, to behold my glory.’

And we should learn for the same reason to be well pleased with the time when Christ calls up to heaven those souls that he has taken care of; for he knows the properest hour,
 hour,

* This Sermon was first preached on occasion of the death of a worthy member of our congregation.

hour, when to dismiss them from flesh into the invisible world.

If they are declining in their religion, and beginning to wander away from God, we may be ready to say, "O that they may live till they are fully recovered again to the brightness of their former profession!" But Christ, who hath the care of them, calls them now, lest they run further away, and fall into grosser sins; he hides them from temptations in the silent grave, and seizes their souls to himself in the wisest and kindest moment.

If they grow more holy, more delightful, and more lovely to all their friends, we are ready to say, "Now let them live long, to bring more glory to God, to please, entertain, and profit us." But the voice of Christ, to whom they had committed their souls, may say, "Now let them die, and quit the world with the fairest honour, that they may leave behind, amongst their friends and the churches, the sweetest favour of all their conversation, and the most precious memory of their names."

Are they taken away by sudden death? They know him who has the keys of death, and they have committed the care of it to him, to determine the time and the manner, when and how they should be released from this prison of flesh, and be taken up to his own bosom. Though they may be conveyed
with

with a sort of surprize into the unseen world, yet it is but a seizure into the arms of their best Beloved, who is ready to receive and conduct them to the Father in perfect righteousness, with abounding joy.

Last Remark. *This doctrine leads us on to a joyful and entertaining prospect of the great and last day; the day when Christ shall make his faithfulness appear in all the trusts that he ever undertook; for then he shall have fulfilled them all, and shall deliver up his account to the Father. Then millions of souls, that were committed to his care in successive ages, and human bodies, an equal number, that had long lain sleeping in the grave under his eye, shall be re-united, to make complete and glorious persons; then shall all his saints at once appear, and give honour and everlasting thanks to their faithful and almighty Guardian.*

Behold, he comes with clouds, and every eye shall see him! He comes in his own glory, in the glory of his Father, and with all his holy angels! Behold, he comes exalted upon a throne of judgment, where the Father hath placed him to finish his great commission, and to pass a decisive sentence upon all mankind. My faith descries him afar off; I see his day, and I rejoice to see it. He shall summon all the nations before him; and I shall appear there, I trust, at his right hand,
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among the blessed. Then shall he remember and fulfil all the kind words that he hath spoken to me on earth, by his holy writings: For in the days of my infirmity and warfare on earth, *I have not been ashamed of him before men, nor will he be ashamed of me before his Father, and his holy angels,* Matt. x. 32.

“ See, O Father, will the Lord Jesus say, “ *See, here am I, and the children that thou hast given me,* Heb. ii. 13. *While they were in the world I kept them, through thy name: Behold, there is not one of them lost,* John xvii. 12.

“ Come,” will the Lord say to every humble believer, “ come to my right hand, and stand there among the faints: Behold, all is safe that thou didst once intrust to my keeping: I know thy faith; I acknowledge thy love; I will now reward all thy humble obedience with everlasting honours; and thou shalt confess I have been a kind and a faithful Friend.”

God the Father shall say to our Lord Jesus, “ Well done, my best of servants, my Son, my First-beloved; thou hast kept all those whom I gave thee to keep, and brought them safe into my presence; they shall be thy glory, and thy eternal crown.” And every faint shall, as it were, echo to the voice of the Father, and say, “ My First-beloved, my Lord, and my best of friends, thou hast kept me through all the days of my infir-

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“ mity and flesh, ever since I gave myself
“ up to thy keeping; and thou hast brought
“ me safe to thy Father’s house; the glory
“ and the crown be thine for ever!”

O the unknown transports of this hour!
The unspeakable joy and glory of this day!
Faith is even astonished at the delightful distant prospect, and longs till the Lord appear.

DISCOURSE XI.

The Ordinary Witnesses of the Spirit.

The First Part of this SERMON.

Rom. viii. 16.

*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit,
that we are the children of God.*

HERE is a sacred honour and dignity conferred upon men by a patent from heaven: The *patent* is the scripture, or word of God, and the *dignity* is, that we are made his children. Here are also two distinct *witnesses* to this title of honour; (*viz.*) our own spirits, and the blessed Spirit of God: *The Spirit itself witnesses with our spirits, that we are the children of the Most High.*

Every one that reads the text may plainly discern, that, by *the Spirit itself*, we must understand the Holy Ghost, or third person in the ever blessed Trinity, who is sent to dwell
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and operate in the hearts of Christians; as it is expressed in several of the foregoing verses. And it is as manifest, that *our own spirit* here signifies that principle within us, distinct from our flesh, whereby we are enabled to think, reason, compare things together, and to judge concerning them. This is sometimes called the *mind*, the *heart*, the *conscience*, the *soul*; and it is termed *our spirit* here in the words before us.

The Spirit of God may sometimes operate by himself alone, in a very extraordinary manner, upon the souls of men, and give them immediate and divine assurances of their adoption and their interest in the love of God, as his children: And this favour was sometimes bestowed in the primitive days of Christianity, when the saints were called in an uncommon manner, to undertake services of uncommon difficulty. But the words of my text seem rather chiefly to refer to that more *ordinary* and *usual testimony* which the Spirit of God gives to our sonship, by assisting our own spirits to attain the knowledge of this privilege.

In order to improve these words, I shall endeavour

Ist, To lead your thoughts on in a few Propositions, toward a plain and easy notion of this ordinary or assisting witness of the Spirit of God.

Idly,

IIIdly, Shew what methods the Holy Spirit generally takes in this work.

IIIIdly, Propose some advices concerning it. And then

IVthly, I shall give my thoughts also concerning the *extraordinary witnesses of the Spirit*.

First, I would open the way toward a *plain and easy notion of this ordinary or assisting witness of the Spirit of God with our own spirits*, in a few Propositions.

I. Prop. *God, in his word, has given us the description and the characters of his children.* This is evident, and beyond dispute. Many scriptures there are that evince it. He has told us what we are by nature; (*viz.*) *Children of wrath*; and laid down the character of sinful man in an unregenerate state, who are called the *children of the devil*. He has acquainted us with what we are by grace; (*viz.*) *His own children, born again, or born of God*; and has laid down various marks of that privilege also, that so we might distinguish between good and evil, between saints and sinners.

The *marks of the children of God* in scripture, are chiefly such as these.

1. They believe in Christ Jesus. John i. 12. *To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God; even to as many as believed in his name.* 1 John v. 1.

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You have the same thing expressed in other words: *Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God*: Whosoever so believes him to be the Messiah, as to receive him for a Saviour from sin and hell, according to his commission to save.

2. They are such as do not willingly indulge sin, that do not make sin their practice. See 1 John iii. 9. *He that is born of God sinneth not*: He doth not drink in iniquity with greediness, as others do; he has still a settled rooted aversion in his mind, to those sinful practices into which sometimes he is drawn by the power or surprize of temptation; *for he has the seed of God abiding in him*, and the divine likeness and temper communicated to him by regeneration, so that he sins not with a full bent of soul, nor with his whole heart, as he loves God, and seeks him, nor with constancy and perseverance, Psal. cxix. 2, 10, 38, 44.

3. *Such as love God, and keep his commandments*, they are the children of God: And this you have frequently repeated in the 1st epistle of John. When a principle of divine love reigns in the heart, we keep the commands of our heavenly Father with delight, and they are not an heavy task or burden to us: *His commandments are not grievous*, 1 John v. 3.

4. Justice and charity toward men, and special affection toward our fellow-christians,

ans, are further evidences of our adoption. 1 John iii. 10. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* When our righteous and friendly conduct toward our fellow-creatures proceeds from a sense of the authority of God, and his divine compassion; when our meekness, gentleness, goodness to to all men, and our peculiar love to the saints of God, spring from a right principle; when we love the brethren because they carry the image of God in them; these are such characters as distinguish the sons of God from the children of wrath, and the seed of the wicked one.

5. Peace-makers are entitled to this dignity: Matt. v. 9. *Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God:* But he that sows discord among brethren is of the seed of the serpent.

6. Sanctified afflictions, and patience under them, is another mark of adoption. Heb. xii. 7. *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons;* and he does this *for our profit, ver. 10. that we might be partakers of his holiness.* If the sorrows, the burdens, the reproaches, the pains, the sicknesses, and the sufferings that we sustain, either from the hands of God or men, do not draw out our angry disquieting passions, but are borne with a holy composure of spirit, looking to the

hand of God as our Father; and if we find our hearts weaned from this life as to a state of sin and sorrow, and drawn nearer to heaven, it is a comfortable sign that we belong to the family of God.

7. They that gain a victory over the world, and live above the reach of the frowns and the smiles of it, they are the children of God too: The apostle John assures us of this, 1 John v. 4. *He that is born of God overcometh the world.*

8. They are the children of God that walk as Christ walked, and live as Christ lived: They that follow the glorious example of the original and first-begotten Son, have the mark of true children. Rom. viii. 29. *God has predestinated all his children to be conformed to the image of his Son Christ Jesus.*

I might sum up all the foregoing evidences of sonship in this general character of likeness and conformity to our Redeemer: For if we consult that text, 1 John v. 6. we shall find that *the water and blood* are the two great testimonies that are given to the *Sonship of our Lord Jesus. This is he that came by water and by blood.* And as he was manifested to be the *Son of God* by the purity of his life, and the blood of martyrdom, which also was a blood of atonement, so are we manifested to be the children of God. The *blood* is our *witness*, when we by faith lay hold of the atoning blood of Jesus, and
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commit our guilty souls to pardoning mercy, to be accepted through that blood of his sacrifice. And when we are sprinkled with the clean water of sanctification, or baptized with the *Holy Spirit* and made holy, as Jesus is holy, then we have *the witness of the water* too. Thus, by the witness of the *water* and the *blood*, Jesus the first Son is evidenced, and we also appear to be children.

II. Prop. As the word of God discovers to us, and describes the characters of his children, so the *Spirit of God works these heavenly dispositions in us, these happy characters of our sonship*. By nature we are the *children of wrath*, the mere seed of the first Adam, and the offspring of Satan, rather than of God; in our corrupt natural state, we are *led by the prince of the power of the air*; we are *children of disobedience*, and of death, Eph. ii. 2. There are none of these divine marks upon us. It is the blessed Spirit that forms these filial graces in our souls, lays the foundation of these evidences in the heart with power, and makes them appear in the life with beauty and praise. Therefore the *children of God* are said to be *born of the Spirit*, John iii. 5, 6.

It is he that takes us out of the kingdom of Satan, the family of death and hell, and brings us into the family of God, and the kingdom of his grace. It is he that, by his divine influences, translates us from darkness

into the kingdom of Christ. It is he that takes away all the wild and savage marks of an unclean beast from the soul, and gives it the disposition and the character of the sheep of Jesus. It is the blessed Spirit who, by his sanctifying and renewing work, stamps the image of God on the soul, forms the features and resemblance of the divine nature, and imprints on the heart such gracious habits and dispositions as render it like to God. Thus the child of God bears the Father's likeness, as the figures engraved on the seal are copied out on the wax. And this some have called the *seal of the Holy Spirit*, Eph. i. 13. and iv. 30.

And as the Spirit of God works these divine principles of holiness in the heart, so he is said to be *given to us, to dwell in us; i. e.* to preserve those holy principles which belong to the children and heirs of God: And in this sense he may be called *an earnest of their future inheritance*, Eph. i. 14.

Blessed are your souls, who have the fore-mentioned characters impressed upon you. Rejoice in your own happy state, and bless the Eternal Spirit, who has stamped the likeness of God upon you; who has *begotten you again* to a new life, by the power of the word working effectually upon your hearts; who has translated you from the household of sin and Satan, and made you the *children of the most high God*.

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Here also we may remark, that in this we bear a resemblance to Christ Jesus, the only begotten Son. It was by the descent of this Spirit on the blessed Virgin, and by the *overshadowing power of the Most High*, that the *child Jesus* was formed; and therefore, that *holy thing which was born of the Virgin, was called the Son of God*, Luke i. 35.

The resemblance holds yet farther: For the Spirit was given to *dwell in Christ without measure*, to sanctify his human nature, and to work miracles, John iii. 34. By this *Spirit of holiness* he was also *raised from the dead*; and thus he was *declared to be the Son of God with power*, as some interpret that text, Rom. i. 5. He was God's First-born, before all worlds; and it is the same Spirit that dwells in him, the original Son, *without measure*, that is sent, according to our measure, to dwell in us also: It is the same Spirit that raises us from a death in trespasses and sins to a new life: It is the same Spirit that is given to sanctify us, and to make us children.

Go on yet, and compare Rom. viii. 9, 11, 14. with Heb. ii. 14. and you will find, as he was pleased in a way of condescension to take flesh and blood upon him, *because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, that he might be like them*: Heb. ii. So he is pleased to give his own Spirit to men, that they might be like him also: For *he that has not the Spirit of Christ is none of his*, Rom. viii.

For this reason he is not ashamed to call them brethren, children of one Father; for he partook of their flesh, and they partake of his Spirit.

III. Prop. *God has given to each of our spirits a power of reflecting upon our own hearts and lives, whereby we become witnesses and judges for or against ourselves: And by this power we pass a judgment both concerning our particular actions, concerning the temper of our spirits, and concerning our state toward God.*

This power is sometimes called *conscience*. It is a faculty whereby we compare our words, our thoughts, and actions, with some rule; and that rule is the law of God: And hereby we judge concerning these *particular thoughts, words, and actions*, whether they are good or bad. But when we compare the *habitual frame and temper* of our spirits, as well as the *transactions and conduct* of our lives, with the plain description and characters of the children of God, that are given us in his word; hereby we judge of our own state, whether it be a *state of sin*, or a *state of grace*.

This is that light that God has set up in men, by which they should pass sentence in their own case, with regard to their own present conduct, and their future hopes. And Solomon, for this reason, calls the *spirit of man*

man the candle of the Lord, Prov. xx. 27. The Heathens had this conscience in them, and those broken pieces of the *law that were written in their hearts*, was the rule by which *their consciences did either excuse or else accuse*, Rom. ii. 15. But we have a more certain rule to judge ourselves by, even the *word of God*, the revelation of his mind and will, that he has made in the Bible. Our consciences must judge according to this rule. We are bid therefore to *try, to judge, to examine ourselves.* 2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Examine and prove yourselves.* And 1 Cor. xi. 28. *Let a man examine himself.* This self-examination is required as a necessary duty, in order to come at the knowledge of our sonship, that *our spirits may be able to bear a witness, that we are the children of God.*

Blessed are they who, upon such an inward search and examination of themselves, can find such marks of his children. Blessed are we, *if our own hearts condemn us not: Then we may assure our hearts before Jesus our Judge, and have confidence at his coming,* 1 John iii. 19. Happy is our state, if our spirits bear witness that we are the children of God, by this inward and impartial reflection upon ourselves, and the comparison of our hearts with this rule of judgment.

IV. Prop. Though God has given us this power of reflecting and comparing ourselves
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with characters laid down in his word, yet *there is need of the assisting light of his Spirit to search with our spirits, and to witness to his own work in our hearts.*

We are too often ready to deceive ourselves in this matter two ways: (1.) In some persons *pride and self-flattery* are so prevalent, that they always think better of themselves than they deserve, and are ready to pronounce themselves *the children of God*, without just evidence and sufficient ground. (2.) Others, who are humble and sincere Christians, have their spirits so depressed, either by a *melancholy constitution*, by a *natural self-diffidence*, by *weakness of body*, or by *heavy afflictions*, that they can see nothing good in themselves; they cannot read any characters of divine grace in their hearts, though grace shines visibly in their whole conversation, to the view of their fellow-christians.

On these accounts, and some others also, we stand in need of divine assistance in this work of *self-examination*. And therefore it is, that though we are commanded to search ourselves, yet we have the examples of saints in the scripture, that desire the Spirit of God to search them too. With what zeal and fervency doth holy David intreat that God would *search him*. See Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24. when he had been examining his own heart in the two former verses, he concludes, *Search me, O Lord, and try me.* As we cannot

not work grace in our own hearts, so in an hour of darkness, we cannot clearly discover that grace that is there, to the full satisfaction of our consciences, unless the same Spirit that wrought it is pleased to reveal it to us by his assisting influences. It is by observations and assistances borrowed from the sun, that *hour-lines* are drawn on a *sun-dial*, and they abide there in the dark; but we cannot find what hour of the day it is, unless the sun shines upon those hour-lines: So grace in the heart is wrought by the Holy Spirit, and it abides still even in the darkest night of temptation, when once the Spirit of God has wrought it there, it shall never be quite lost; for *the seed of God remains*: but the soul cannot discern it clearly, so as to take comfort from it in an hour of darkness; unless the Spirit, like the sun, dart his beams of light into the soul, and discover his own work. Therefore, a great writer of practical divinity, Mr. R. Allein, expresses it, “As the Spirit seals us, by being the mark of the Lord upon us, so he witnesses, by being the light of the Lord within us, whereby we come to discern the mark of the Lord upon us.” As Hagar in the wilderness did not see the fountain of water, though it was near her, till *God opened her eyes*, Gen. xxi. 19. So the springs of divine life and holiness, which the Spirit of God has raised within our souls, are sometimes, as it were, hidden from the soul itself, till

till the Spirit shew it to the believer, by assisting his enquiring faculties, and shedding down a divine light. This leads me to

The *second* thing proposed: And that is, To shew *the method by which the Spirit generally works in this assisting testimony.*

1. He doth it by *stirring up the soul to a most diligent search, and making it unwearied in this toil and labour of self-examination.* I call it *labour and toil*, for by nature we are very unwilling to be accurate, and strict, and just, in the search of ourselves. The Spirit of God will hold us to it, when we find great averfions and disinclination in our own hearts to such a work. We, who have so much sin, are sometimes much afraid to look into the bottom of our souls, lest we should find no sincerity there: It is the Spirit of truth therefore, that excites us to diligence in these holy enquiries.

2. *He gives us sometimes a fair opportunity and occasion for the exercise of some grace in a clear and distinct manner;* and hereby assists the witness of our spirits. Perhaps by the discovery of the grace and glory of Christ in a sermon, he invites our faith, our love, our holy joy, to appear: By a kind providence, and some new signal mercy, he puts us in mind of thankfulness: Or if our souls have lain long in a secure careless frame, he leaves us (it may be) under some spiritual affliction,
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some terrible temptation, and awakens us to thoughtfulness, repentance, holy mournings, and longing desires after God. Thus the characters of adoption appear in our hearts, that before were covered over with the dust of this world, and buried under the cares or vanities of life.

3. *It is the Spirit of God that inwardly assists these holy principles, and strengthens them in their exercise, when he hath given an outward and providential occasion to awaken them:* For as he is the first spring of all the powers of the new creature, so he is a constant assisting principle to promote their holy exercise. He dwells in the saints for ever, and is an everlasting spring of their holiness. It is he that excites and manages the vital motions of our souls, and makes it appear by holy exercises, that we have spiritual life in us; otherwise the providential occasion and opportunity for the exercise of such a grace might be given, and pass away, and be lost, while the soul itself lies sluggish, negligent, and inactive, if the Holy Spirit did not set it on work: For *we are not of ourselves sufficient even to think or do any thing truly good,* 2 Cor. iii. 5.

4. *The Spirit of God sometimes assists this witnessing work, by bringing some word of scripture into the mind, wherein the character of a child of God is described, agreeable to some holy disposition which we find working in our*
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own hearts: And this makes the matter clear, plain, and evident to the conscience. Though this be not a constant method with God, yet surely the experience of many Christians can subscribe to the truth of it, when they have been searching their own hearts, to find what grace is there, some proper sentence of scripture has been brought to their minds, wherein they have, as in a glass, beheld their own face, beheld the likeness of the children of God in their own souls; and then they have been constrained to pronounce with holy joy concerning themselves, *Surely I am a child of God.*

Nor is it at all hard to suppose, that God's Holy Spirit should cast a happy sentence of his own word into our minds, or bring it to our remembrance, in order to evidence our adoption, when it is generally granted the evil spirit may have such access to our minds by the organs of the brain, or the fancy, as to suggest to our thoughts profane, impure, malicious, or blasphemous speeches, or to tempt us to presumption or despair.

5. It might be added, in the last place, *that the discerning faculty of the soul is enabled to act aright by the Spirit of God, and kept from all dangerous mistakes and self-deceivings in this work of examination.* Hereby he makes it appear, that such a principle of faith, or love, or repentance, which we find working within us, is true evangelical repentance,

pentance, is sincere love, and faith unfeigned; and that it is indeed God's own work in the heart: And thus he puts an end to our doubtful fears about the truth of grace.

These things seem to me so plain and intelligible in themselves, and so correspondent with those divine aids of the Holy Spirit which are promised to the children of God in all their serious and religious exercises, and without which we can do nothing that is truly good, that I trust it will be easily understood, and readily received, by those who are much conversant in transacting their most important affairs with God, according to the light of scripture.

The substance of this testimony of the Spirit to our adoption may be represented, in short, after this manner: The Spirit of God in his word has described the marks and characters of his children; and, by his gracious influence, he works these holy dispositions, these characters in our hearts: God has given us a conscience, which is a faculty of comparing ourselves with the rule of his word, and judging accordingly: The Spirit of God, by his power, and by his providence, awakens these holy dispositions into lively exercise: He assists our enquiring and our judging faculties, helps us to compare our own souls with his word, and thus confirms our own spirits in the belief of this Proposition, that *we are the children of God.* This
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is the more *common and ordinary* way and method, whereby God is pleased to give the comforts of adoption to his people.

It is the remark of a judicious writer on this subject, “ That as on the one hand
 “ wicked men are sometimes convinced in
 “ their own consciences that they are chil-
 “ dren of wrath, and further confirmed in
 “ this persuasion by that evil spirit who la-
 “ bours from hence to drive and hurry them
 “ on to despair; so, on the other hand, when
 “ the hearts of believers speak peace to them,
 “ telling them, that *God is their Father*, re-
 “ conciled to them in Christ, and the Holy
 “ Spirit saith the same also, then they have
 “ perfect peace.”

That the Spirit of God may thus concur with the inward consciousness and testimony of our own spirits, in so important a matter as our love to God, and his love to us, is very easy to be supposed, when the apostle speaks of this concurring witness of the Spirit of God to his own consciousness, and his sincere love of his countrymen, when he says, Rom. ix. 1. *My conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.* There is nothing in all this account of things but what is perfectly agreeable to the word of God, and to the rational actings of created minds, under the happy influences of the uncreated Spirit.

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The *third* thing proposed was, To give a few *advices relating to this ordinary witness of the Spirit of God concurring with our spirits.*

1. *Satisfy not yourselves with one slight examination, but renew the work frequently, and search whether you find the same marks and evidences of adoption remaining in you or no.* Do not content yourself to run the whole course of life with one or two solemn examinations of your own hearts, when God first began to work religion in you, but enquire and see whether your principles of grace abide in the same brightness, evidence, and activity, as in time past. Perhaps by this means you may discern a sensible growth in grace and you may find abundant advantage, worth all the care and labour of self-examination; or, if you find decays and backslidings, it will awaken repentance and zeal toward a recovery.

2. *In this searching work keep aloof from carnal self-love.* When you call yourselves to an account, set yourselves before the bar of your own consciences, as before the bar of God; for conscience is a judge for God within us. Pass an impartial sentence concerning yourselves, even such as you suppose God himself would pass, if you were now summoned before his tribunal. Suffer not yourselves now to be biassed by the esteem or the fondness that we all have naturally for ourselves. The matter is too important, the

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enquiry too solemn and awful, for you to indulge *self-flattery*. It will be no profit to deceive your souls in this work, for you cannot deceive God. Come therefore and apply yourselves to this holy exercise, with an unbiaſſed deſign to pronounce concerning yourselves whatever you find the word of God pronounces concerning you.

3. *Trust not merely to your own ſpirits, without earneſt prayer for the aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God.* Jer. xvii. 9. *The heart is deceitful above all things: Who can know it?* Therefore David prays importunately, as we have before obſerved, that God would *ſearch* him and *try* him, Pſal. cxxxix. 23, 24. Beg of the Lord that he would not ſuffer you to be deceived, when you ſet about this ſearching work; for it is a matter of moſt high concern. A miſtake here is dangerous, and it may be for ever fatal.

4. *When you find any character of adoption made to appear with ſtrong evidence upon your ſouls, be not utterly diſcouraged, though you do not find all the characters of grace there.*

It is true indeed, where there is a new nature and a divine principle wrought in the heart, there are the ſeeds of every holy diſpoſition; but they do not all ariſe to an equal ſtrength, nor ſtand forth and ſhine with equal evidence. The Spirit of God may ſometimes witneſs with your ſpirits, though but one mark of adoption appear plainly,

plainly, while others are not so easily discovered. A single bough of the tree of life has upheld souls from drowning in despair, when they could but lay hold of that one bough. Many a Christian, under great difficulties, inward tumults, doubts, and dark-nesses of spirit, have been enabled to hold on their way by living upon some one plain scripture, and finding the sense of it transcribed into their own hearts. Some one evidence of true faith, or holy love, of repentance, or heavenly-mindedness, has been set in such a divine light before them, that they could not well mistake; and this has borne up their hope in an hour of temptation. But I must add

5. *Though you ought to bless God for any mark of his children in your hearts, yet you ought not to content yourself with one mark, since the scripture has given us many.* The faculties of our nature are various, and they have their various operations: The passions or affections of our souls are many, and some of them are frequently in exercise: Now all the passions and faculties of nature, with all their operations, should be conformable to the rule of the word of God; and when it is so, there appears a variety of marks of the children of God upon us, even as many as there are powers or passions belonging to our souls. Whether it be *love*, it is love to God, and the children of God; for they are

born of the same Father: Whether it be *hatred*, it is hatred to sin, and to all that displeases God: If it be *delight*, it is a delight in heavenly things, and in holy ordinances: If it be *desire*, it is a desire after God, after a sense of his love, a greater acquaintance with him, a more exact conformity to him, and a breathing after the heavenly state, where we shall never sin against him. Thus since the several powers and principles in our nature being sanctified, yield us several distinct evidences of adoption, let us not be contented with one of them, but press forward toward a stronger hope of our sonship. Let us labour and pray that all the springs of action within us, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit, may yield the fruits of holiness, may shine bright in a way of evidence, and raise our hope to full assurance.

6. When you have found any comfortable and solid hopes of your adoption, by the Holy Spirit witnessing in this rational way with your spirits, that you are the children of God, *walk in the cheerful sense of it continually*; go on in the way of holiness, rejoicing in the Lord. This was one end why Christ has given us the characters of his disciples in scripture, that when we find them in our own hearts we might rejoice. This was part of the design of his *farewell-sermon* to his apostles, wherein some of these characters are described. See John xv. 11. *These things*

things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. The blessed *Spirit*, in the same discourse, is promised as a *Comforter*, and we ought to walk in the light of his consolations. It is the most evangelical and the most constraining method of his grace, when he carries on his sanctifying work by the influence of peace and joy; and it is one of the glories of a Christian, that the *joy of the Lord is his strength*, to fulfil all the duties of righteousness.

DISCOURSE XII.

The Extraordinary Witness of the S P I R I T.

The Second Part of this SERMON.

Rom. viii. 16.

*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit,
that we are the children of God.*

IT is great and divine condescension, that the blessed God should ever take any of the children of wrath, and make them the children of his love: But he condescends yet farther, when he sends down his own Spirit to give us notice of our adoption, and to acquaint us with our high and holy privilege.

The common and ordinary method whereby the Spirit of God bears witness that we are his children, is by drawing out our own spirits to search and enquire into the filial and holy dispositions which he himself has wrought in our hearts, and by assisting our consciences

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consciences in this enquiry. Thus by his gentle, easy, and insensible influences upon our souls, he leads us on in a rational manner to infer and conclude, that we are born of God, because we find the image of God impressed on us, and those divine qualities wrought in us, which belong only to his children. This has been the subject of the foregoing Discourse.

I proceed now to consider the *extraordinary witness* of the Holy Spirit, when in a more immediate* and more sensible manner he raises in the hearts of some of his special favourites a powerful and a pleasant sense of their interest in the love of God.

This *extraordinary witness* may be distinguished into two kinds.

1. It may imply some very uncommon and powerful confirmation of the ordinary and rational witness, by most sensible impressions of divine love on the heart, by which it is raised to holy raptures, to heavenly joy and assurance. Perhaps the apostle Peter may have some respect to this, 1 Pet. i. 8. where, speaking of Christ, he adds, *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye*

R 4

rejoice

* *Note*, By the word *immediate* here I do not mean without ordinances, such as prayer, meditation, &c. but rather *sudden* and *speedy*.

rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Here it is supposed in the text, that the persons to whom he writes were conscious of their own faith in an unseen Saviour, and their love to him; and thence they could infer that they were accepted of God: But without some peculiar and more uncommon influences of the Holy Spirit, they could hardly be said to arise to such *joy as was unspeakable and full of glory*, or glorified joy, as the Greek text expresses it, *χαρα διδαξαμεν*, a-kin to that which the saints possess in the glorified state.

2. There is yet another sort of extraordinary witness of the Spirit; and that is, when in an immediate and powerful manner the Holy Spirit impresses the soul with an assurance of divine love, and gives the heart of a saint such a full discovery of his adoption or interest in the favour of God, without the more slow and argumentative method of comparing the dispositions of their souls with some special characters of the children of God in scripture. The Spirit of God may witness in an extraordinary manner to our adoption, by an inward experimental sense of the love of God shed abroad in the heart, assuring some of his favourites that they are the sons or daughters of God, without any particular examination of the heart at that time, or any present reflections on the characters of adoption described in the Bible.

I confess the several acts of the mind of man, even the reasoning and argumentative acts of the soul, are so quick and sudden, and the sensible joy that may arise from them follows in so swift and close a succession, that it is sometimes very hard to distinguish and define the bounds and limits of the several actions, perceptions, and impressions on the mind. On this account I shall not be solicitous to keep up the distinction between these two kinds of the extraordinary witness of the Spirit, but shall only speak of them in general, as distinguished from the ordinary witness of the Spirit, by the more immediate sensations of divine love, that are impressed through the peculiar favour of God on the souls of some of his children.

I am very sensible that, in our present age, the Spirit of God is so much withdrawn from the Christian church in all his operations, that a man exposes himself to the censure of wild *enthusiasm*, and a heated fancy, if he ventures to discourse at all on such a theme as this: But as I am persuaded these things were frequent matter of Christian experience in the primitive days of the gospel, and in scenes of sharp persecution, so I am satisfied that God has not utterly withheld his divine favours of this kind from his churches and his children, for sixteen hundred years together; and I hope I shall make it appear, that a supposition of this extraordinary witness of the Spirit

Spirit may be maintained, without giving a loofe to all the roving dreams of a diftemper'd brain, or to the bold prefumptions of weak and conceited men, or falfe and deceitful impoftors.

The method of my Difcourfe is this.

Ift, I will offer fome *very probable proofs* that there has been, and is, fuch a thing as the *extraordinary witness of the Spirit of God*.

IIdly, I fhall mention *a few of the fpecial feafons or occafions* of fuch a divine favour.

IIIdly, Shew how *it may be diftinguifhed from delufions of Satan*, and from the mere ferments and vivacity of animal nature, or a difordered fancy.

IVthly, Represent fome *other characters* of it, and fhew wherein it differs from the ordinary witness of the Spirit. And then

Vthly, Conclude with *a few Directions* relating to it.

Ift, Let me offer fome proofs that there is fuch an extraordinary witness of the Spirit. Now that this is not the language of wild enthufiafm, or a mere fantaftic notion of the brain, will appear from thefe few Con- fiderations.

I. *Confideration*. The great God, the Father of fpirits, can reveal a truth to the mind of his creature, with fuch life, and power, and evidence, that the mind cannot difsent from it,

it, or refuse to believe it; the overpowering light may be so divine and convincing, that the creature may be fully and justly persuaded it is a divine truth. Those who believe the prophets and apostles divinely inspired, can have no reasonable doubt about this proposition.

II. *Consideration.* It has pleased the great and blessed God to give such immediate assurances of his own love to some of his favourites of old, by visions and voices, and the message of angels, and by inward impressions on their minds by his own Spirit. Thus Abraham was assured that *God was his God, and would be his exceeding great reward*, Gen. xv. 17. Thus concerning Moses, it was made known that he was the *friend of God*, Exod. xxxiii. 11. Thus Daniel was often informed that he was *a man greatly beloved*, Dan. ix. 23. and x. 11, 19. Mary Magdalene, and some others, who conversed with Christ when he was here on earth, had a particular assurance *that their sins were forgiven them*. Paul was assured that he was *a chosen vessel*. And indeed, all the apostles had sufficient evidence of their acceptance with God, and their interest in the love of Christ, by the extraordinary communications of the Holy Ghost. It is the opinion of a late ingenious writer, that not only the apostles themselves, but even all the primitive Christians that were truly converted by their ministry, received these

these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost in some degree; which did not only witness to the *Christian religion*, but to the comfort of those who had it, with the assurance of God's pardon and acceptance. (See *Miscellanea Sacra*, Esay i. p. 117, 126, 134.)

III. *Consideration*. There is no evidence from reason or scripture, that all such immediate divine favours are ceased; and though there is not the same occasion for the frequency of them as there was in the beginning of Christianity, yet the Spirit of God is a free and unconfined agent; and since it is plain from scripture, that he doth still dwell in his people, and carry on his divine work among the churches of Christ in all ages, to the end of the world, why may he not sometimes discover his power and grace in an extraordinary manner, above and beyond his ordinary and usual operations?

IV. *Consideration*. Some *special seasons and occasions* may arise, and indeed have arisen, wherein the blessed Spirit of God has thought it proper, vastly to exceed the measures and rules of his ordinary operations, in the exercise of his offices of illumination and sanctification? And why may it not be allowed in his consolations also?

(1.) There may be some reason for extraordinary acts of his illumination; as when persons are not able to read the holy scriptures, or when the Bible is withheld from them,

them, and when they have enjoyed but very poor and insufficient ministrations of the gospel; the blessed Spirit may sometimes shine into humble souls with some uncommon rays of divine truth, and they may enjoy more sensible teachings of the Holy Spirit: Or sometimes a person of low parts, and weak understanding, may have been illuminated in the knowledge of some scriptural doctrine, beyond what the mere exercises of their own feeble reason upon scripture would have attained to in so short a time: And perhaps some Christians of better capacities may have enjoyed this favour also. Luther, that extraordinary servant of God in the Reformation, is said to have oftentimes learned more of the gospel on his knees in prayer, than in his laborious studies.

(2.) There may be, and there have been, instances of an extraordinary work of sanctification. To what glorious degrees of piety, virtue, and true holiness, have some persons been raised in a very short time? A most astonishing change has been wrought in their souls, and a swift preparation for heaven, beyond what appears in the ordinary work of the Spirit, by the rational or persuasive influence of outward ordinances.

And since the Spirit of God appears sometimes, for the honour of his own grace, to be an extraordinary *Enlightener* and *Sanctifier*;

Why

Why may he not be an extraordinary *Comforter* also?

V. *Consideration*. If we can credit the accounts which have been given by holy men in later ages, and some of which are recorded in the memoirs of their lives, we must confess that there have been instances and experiences of most sublime and extraordinary consolations of the blessed Spirit bestowed on them; such as, upon the most rational survey of things according to scripture, we cannot but conclude to have been truly divine.

It would take up many whole pages to cite such instances as we find upon record, in the lives of particular persons. Many such may be found in the late Mr. Fleming's *fulfilling of the scriptures*, especially in Scotland. I shall mention one only, and it shall be a most uncontested example, in our land in England, even in our own day; the example of a person whose solid sense, whose deep sagacity, whose sedate judgment, and the superior excellence of his reasoning powers, leave no room to charge him with vain and delusive raptures of a heated imagination. The name is the late venerable Mr. John Howe. The name commands respect, and confirms the narrative. He wrote the following paragraphs in the blank leaf of his own Bible.

“ December 26th 1689. After that I had
 “ long, seriously, and repeatedly thought with
 “ myself, that, besides a full and undoubted
 “ assent

“ assent to the objects of faith, a vivifying fa-
“ voury taste and relish of them was also ne-
“ cessary that with stronger force, and more
“ powerful energy, they might penetrate into
“ the most inward center of my heart, and
“ there being most deeply fixed and rooted,
“ govern my life; and that there could be no
“ other sure ground whereon to conclude and
“ pass a sound judgment, on my good estate
“ Godward; and after I had, in my course of
“ preaching, been largely insisting on 2 Cor.
“ i. 12. *This is my rejoicing, the testimony of a*
“ *good conscience, &c.* this very morning I
“ awoke out of a most ravishing and delight-
“ ful dream, that a wonderful and copious
“ stream of celestial rays, from the lofty
“ throne of the divine Majesty, did seem to
“ dart into my open and expanded breast. I
“ have often since, with great complacency,
“ reflected on that very signal pledge of spe-
“ cial divine favour, vouchsafed to me on that
“ noted memorable day; and have with re-
“ peated fresh pleasure, tasted the delights
“ thereof.”

“ But what of the same kind I sensibly
“ felt through the admirable bounty of my
“ God, and the most pleasant comforting in-
“ fluence of the Holy Spirit, on October 22.
“ 1704. far surpassed the most expressive
“ words my thoughts can suggest. I then
“ experienced an inexpressibly pleasant melt-
“ ing of heart, tears gushing out of mine eyes
for

“ for joy that God should shed abroad his
 “ love abundantly through the hearts of men;
 “ and that, for this very purpose, mine own
 “ heart should be so signally possessed of and
 “ by his blessed Spirit, Rom. v. 5.”

Besides this instance of so sedate, so rational, and so judicious a person, there have been many others of our pious fathers in England, but especially, as I said before, in the church of Scotland, have enjoyed such divine visits, and given very sensible evidence that the Holy Spirit is not utterly withdrawn from men, even as to his extraordinary influences.

If any thing could be added to this testimony of Mr. Howe, it should be the instance of Mr. Flavel, the famous practical divine in the west of England, who, in his treatise of the *soul of man*, gives us this account of himself, but with his name concealed: “ That,
 “ in a journey on horseback, he fell into a
 “ divine meditation, wherein he had such
 “ tokens of the love of God, and his interest
 “ in the divine favour, manifested to him,
 “ that greatly surpassed all the rational and inferential evidences that ever he had; though
 “ he was known to be a close walker with
 “ God, and an eminent saint, and a lively
 “ preacher of the blessed gospel of Christ.”

VI. *Consideration.* There have been several learned and judicious divines, who have declared their firm belief of such extraordinary manifestations

manifestations and witnessings of the blessed Spirit: which belief has risen from their acquaintance with the scriptures, and their observations of the dealings of God with the spirits of his people, in some uncommon cases, though they have not professed any such experiences of their own. So the worthy and pious Mr. Caryll, on Job x. The Spirit brings in the *witness of the water, and the blood*, which is his mediate work. But besides and above these, he sometimes gives a distinct witness of his own, which is his immediate work; and is, in a way of peculiarity and transcendency, called the *witness of the Spirit*.

The learned and venerable Dr. Owen, in his *Treatise of communion with God*, p. 293. saith, “ There are two ways whereby the
 “ Spirit worketh this joy in the heart of be-
 “ lievers. (1.) He doth it immediately by
 “ himself, without the consideration of any
 “ other acts or works of his, or the interpo-
 “ sition of any reasonings, or deductions, and
 “ conclusions. This does not arise from our
 “ reflex consideration of the love of God, but
 “ rather gives occasion thereunto. He so
 “ sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts,
 “ and fills them with gladness by an immedi-
 “ ate act and operation. Of this joy there is
 “ no account to be given, but that the Spirit
 “ worketh it when and how he will: He se-
 “ cretly infuseth and distils it into the soul,

“prevailing against all fears and sorrows,
 “filling it with gladness, exultations, and
 “sometimes with unspeakable raptures of the
 “mind.” To this the Doctor adds,

(2.) “The Spirit works this joy also me-
 “diately by his other works towards us, &c.
 “These are after the common or ordinary
 “manner.”

That great and evangelical divine, Dr. Goodwin, in Vol. iv. Part 2. p. 95, 96. declares, “That, besides the testimony of the
 “water and the blood, that is, faith in the
 “death of Christ and sanctification, there is
 “a third testimony, and that is the Holy
 “Ghost himself, which is immediate; that
 “is, though it backs and confirms what the
 “other two said, yet it quotes them not,
 “builds not his testimony on them, but raises
 “the heart to see its adoption and sonship,
 “by an immediate discovery of God’s mind
 “and love.” And a little after he adds,
 “This witness is not a testimony fetched
 “out of a man’s self, or the *common* work of
 “the Spirit in man, as the others were, but
 “he speaks from himself: As when the broad
 “seal is put to by a king, he writes *teste me-*
 “*ipso*; so doth the Spirit speak in the lan-
 “guage of a king, *teste meipso*, witness myself;
 “and receives and borrows no witness from
 “what is in us, but makes his own abundantly
 “satisfy.”

The late pious and judicious expositor of
 scripture,

scripture, Mr. Samuel Clark, has written in the defence of this extraordinary witness of the Spirit, and describes it thus: “When
 “ the Spirit of God, without consideration
 “ of, or reflecting upon, any of those gracious
 “ qualifications he has formerly wrought in
 “ the soul, does, by his own immediate power,
 “ imprint this persuasion upon the heart,
 “ *Thou art a child of God*; and by an inward
 “ and secret, yet powerful voice, doth say to
 “ the soul, *Thou art a believer, thy sins are*
 “ *pardoned*, or to that purpose; and so satis-
 “ fies the soul concerning its state and con-
 “ dition.”

I proceed, in the *second place*, to consider the *special seasons and occasions* wherein such favours have been bestowed on men.

1. The Spirit of God has, in a more immediate manner, made extraordinary impressions of the love of God on the soul, when persons have been called to *great and difficult services* in the church, or to *uncommon sufferings* for the sake of Christ. St. Paul was in *labours more abundant, and in sufferings above measure*, beyond the rest of the apostles; he had need of eminent support: He was assured by a vision, that he *was a chosen vessel*: He was taken into heaven before-hand, and had a sight and taste of unseen future glories, to encourage his zeal and patience, 2 Cor. xii. And if we read the history of the martyrs,

even in later as well as in ancient times, we can hardly forbear to believe this truth, when they have exulted under a sense of divine love, in the midst of racks and flames.

2. When the *temptations* of some humble souls *have been extraordinary*, and their afflictions above measure, pressing and overwhelming; when the hurry and tumult of their spirits hath not suffered them to recollect in a calm and rational way, the evidences of their adoption, the Spirit of God may see fit to give a faint such a divine cordial to keep him from sinking. When a Christian has been long contesting with doubts and darkenesses, and been oppressed with many fears, the blessed Spirit has sometimes let a sudden light into the heart, and with or without some word of scripture, has given surprising consolation. Mr. S. Clark tells us of a minister, who having been under a spirit of bondage many years, and now even ready to die in that condition, when Rom. viii. was begun to be read to him, a little before his last gasp, stopping at ver. 1. “ There is therefore ‘ now no condemnation to them that are in ‘ Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, ‘ but after the Spirit:’ *Stay*, said he, *I never saw so much in those words in all my days, though I have read them often, as I see now.* This seems to be an instance of the sudden and extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit in his enlightening grace, as well as his witnessing

witnessing and comforting power. This has been the case of some holy souls in their dying hours, or when just departing from the body, they have, as it were, entered into the world of light before they have left this world of sense, and flesh, and blood; or rather, heaven itself hath entered into their spirits.

3. When Christians of the first rank of piety *have been warmly engaged in most lively acts of devotion*, in fervent and holy prayer, and they have been brought near to heaven in the frame of their spirits, they have had a divine foretaste of the joys of the upper world, and an assurance given them of their own interest therein. Daniel had been engaged in fervent and zealous intercession for the church of God, when a heavenly messenger was sent to acquaint him, that he was *a man greatly beloved*, Dan. ix.

Or 4. Perhaps the Spirit of God may think it necessary to uphold some poor weak Christians of the lowest rank of understanding, by some immediate impressions of the love of God, when he sees that their love to God is great and sincere, but they are so unskilled in the exercises of their rational powers, that they hardly know how to compare their hearts with the scripture, and pass a determinate judgment on themselves. Such weak creatures, it may be, could never come to any settled hope or peace, without such divine condescensions; and especially if they are

under some special temptation, which gives a confusion or darkness to their thoughts.

Thomas was but a weak believer; he knew not how to build his faith of a risen Saviour on what Christ himself had foretold, or on the testimony of his brethren, which were sufficiently just, and rational foundations for his faith: Therefore, in great condescension to his weakness, *Christ appeared to him, and shewed him the print of the nails in his hands, and the wound of the spear in his side*: Upon which discovery, Thomas cries out with joy, *My Lord, and my God!*

It is possible that other occasions may arise in the course of divine providence, wherein the great and gracious God may see it necessary to bestow such peculiar and extraordinary favours on some of his people; but there seems to have been sufficient evidence already given, that some of the wise and the learned, as well as some of the weaker rank of Christians, have had heavenly experience of this uncommon witness of the Spirit.

The *third thing* I proposed, was to shew *how these extraordinary favours of heaven may be distinguished from the delusions of Satan*, and from the mere ferments and fits of vivacity in animal nature, or a disordered fancy.

It has been said indeed, though perhaps too rashly, that they who go about to assert an immediate testimony, will never secure the soul from delusion: Satan will soon find artifices

artifices to counterfeit this testimony, and bear witness in the Spirit's stead; and when we think we have the Spirit of truth to assure us, we shall have the father of lies to deceive us.

But if Christians are careful and watchful in this matter, there are signs whereby the testimony of the Spirit may be distinguished from his delusions.

Some divines have supposed this testimony of the Spirit to be known as the sun is, by its own light; and a man who hath seen the sun, can never mistake the moon for it; the very glory of the sun manifests itself, and convinces every beholder. And perhaps in the ancient inspiration of the prophets, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the days of the apostles, there was a divine self-distinguishing light that accompanied these heavenly favours, which we know not how to judge of at this distance of time; we who never have experienced what divine inspiration is.

But the surest way of our discerning the extraordinary witnessings or joys of the Holy Spirit, is by the effects; which are such as these.

I. *It fills the soul with great degrees of humility and self-abasement, under a sense of its own vileness, guilt, and unworthiness; as holy Job, when he saw God in some more uncommon manifestations of his power and glory, he abhorred himself in dust and ashes,*

Job xlii. 4, 5. So Ifaiah, when he had beheld the Lord fitting upon a throne, high, and lifted up, *Wo is me*, saith he, *I am a man of unclean lips*, Ifa. vi. 1, &c. But vain delusions puff up the soul with an high conceit of itself; as Simon Magus, when, by the power of the devil, he performed some strange feats, he gave out that he was some great person, Acts viii. 9, 10. Many other instances of the like kind might be produced out of the histories of the Christian church.

II. By this testimony of the Spirit *the soul is led to a more sensible dependence on divine grace*, having an inward and effectual conviction how dark and weak it is in itself, and how powerful is the grace of God, and the operation of the Spirit: it makes the soul run to the protection and succour of almighty grace; whereas vain delusions of the fancy, or temptations of the devil, rather lead the soul away from divine grace, and incline it to a sort of self-sufficiency and dependence upon its own attainments, its own light, and its own strength.

III. The witness of the Spirit *does more establish the soul in the great doctrines of the gospel, and particularly in faith on Christ Jesus*. Many of these immediate testimonies of old were given to the primitive Christians with this design, to confirm them in the doctrines of grace, and in the faith of Christ Jesus. When St. Paul was transported into the third heaven,

heaven, 1 Cor. xii. and had doubtless an uncommon manifestation of the love of God; as soon as the next danger and trial appeared, *he besought the Lord importunately*, and could not be satisfied till he received this answer from Christ; *my grace is sufficient for thee*, 1 Cor. xii. He was weak in himself, but strong in Christ. But, on the other hand, it has been evident too often, when the devil has endeavoured to delude weak creatures in this respect, he has drawn them off from Christ, or filled their imaginations with some strange errors, and led them away into false and foolish opinions, contrary to the doctrines of the gospel. The blessed Spirit will perform his office when he becomes a *Comforter*, he will be an *Advocate* for Christ, (for so the word *paracletos* also signifies;) he will *take of the things of Christ, and shew them to the soul*; he will guide his people into the same truths to which he witnessed so gloriously in the primitive times; and will confirm believers in the faith of the holy scriptures, John xvi. 13, 14.

IV. The witness of the Spirit draws out the heart to some special degrees of love to God, *and engages it in warm and lively thanksgivings for such divine and undeserved favours*: The soul admires the rich grace and goodness of God in Christ Jesus. Thence will arise an utter aversion to all sin, an hatred of every thing that is displeasing to God, a
powerful

powerful sense of indwelling corruption, a watchful care to please God in every thing, and to make some humble returns of love for such inestimable favours, and divine manifestations; whereas the warm presumptions of fancy, or the delusions of the devil, leave the soul in a more careless and unholy frame; or, at least, they are oftentimes attended, or quickly followed, by some powerful temptation to gross iniquity; which the deluded soul too often and too easily complies with: And there have been many instances, wherein persons under the power of vain delusions from the devil, have been drawn away to the practice of various sorts of crimes, and particularly to foul and scandalous sins.

In the last place, I might add also, in general, that though the Spirit of God may witness in an extraordinary manner to our adoption, when the soul cannot plainly see, or does not actually and plainly recollect the characters of adoption in itself; *yet it never leaves the soul without awakening the exercise of such graces as are indeed the sure marks and evidences of the children of God*: Where the Spirit comes, it will bring some of its own fruits with it, in a sensible manner. Now the *fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*, Gal. v. 22. If we are comforted by the Spirit, we *shall crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts*, and endeavour to walk

walk and live as becomes the sons and daughters of such a Father as God is.

Upon the whole, I conclude, that it does not seem to be agreeable to the wisdom and providence of God, in the government of the world, to suffer the devil so exactly to counterfeit the works of his own Spirit, as to leave no marks or evidences whereby to distinguish them from the impostures of Satan. Truth and holiness are the objects of the devil's hatred; and though he may transform himself in some particulars into an angel of light, yet he brings along with him some peculiar evil badge, whereby he may be known or distinguished: And if Christians will be sincere and honest, watchful and diligent, to examine not only the present impressions, but the succeeding effects of such sort of assurances of their adoption, together with earnest prayer to be kept from all delusions, I can hardly think that God will suffer his own people to be imposed upon in a matter of so sacred importance.

The *fourth thing* I proposed, was to mention briefly some characters of this extraordinary witness of the Spirit, wherein it differs from the ordinary witness.

1. The *extraordinary* testimony of our adoption is a more sensible and strong impression upon the soul; which seems to be distinguished in itself from the more slow, successive, and

and rational operations of the human faculties. The spirit of a Christian, searching out his own interest in the love of God, exercises his reasoning powers, lays down these propositions: *He that believes in Christ, or he that loveth God, is a child of God.* Again, *I believe in Christ, or I love God; and then it infers this conclusion; Therefore I am one of his children.* Now the Spirit of God, in his ordinary and usual influences, does so gently, so secretly, and in such a con-natural manner, assist these operations of the soul, that it seems to be all our own work; and the influences of the Spirit are seldom sensibly distinguished from the operations of our own faculties; and we learn, that we have the assistance of the Holy Spirit herein, rather by the doctrine of scripture, and by its sanctifying effects, than by any powerful sensations of a superior influence on our souls: But in the extraordinary witness the case is otherwise; for the superior and external influence appears strong and sensible. The Holy Spirit impresses the conclusion, or the assurance of our adoption, with power upon the soul, without any successive deduction of it from any foregoing propositions, sets it in a bright light, and persuades the soul to believe it.

2. This extraordinary witness *is usually short and sudden, the other is more durable;* this is only a cordial to encourage us in an
hour

hour of danger, or support us in a fainting season; the other is our common food, and our daily refreshment. It has been said of this favour, it is *rara bora, brevis mora*: A visit seldom bestowed, and of short continuance.

3. The *ordinary witness* of the Spirit of God with our spirits, proving our regeneration and adoption in a rational way, *may in some measure be made out to others; but the extraordinary witness of the Spirit is like the white stone of absolution, and the new name written in it; Rev. ii. 17. which none knows but he that receives it.* It is like *hidden manna*, with which God, at special seasons, may feed his children in secret.

4. The *extraordinary witness* of the Spirit *fills the soul with great and exceeding joy, and brings it, as it were, within the confines of heaven: It is joy unspeakable, and glorified, as the apostle Peter calls it:* The other maintains the soul in such a degree of peace, comfort, and well-grounded hope, as carries the Christian onward through the difficulties and duties of life, though without such raptures of inward joy. There is an unknown sensation of heavenly light and love, which runs through the spirit of a Christian, under such extraordinary assurances of divine love; and it has been with a saint at such a time as it was with Peter in the mount, when he said, *Lord, it is good for us to be here.* When he

he was overwhelmed with revelation and pleasure, such a soul has felt more than feeble nature was able to bear, and has cried out, *It is enough, Lord; or, It is too much for a state of flesh and blood, Lord: Either withhold thy comforts, or enlarge the vessel; for i cannot bear these joys.*

5. This extraordinary witness of the Spirit doth not belong to every saint. *Many a Christian, it may be, passes the whole course of his life, and practises a regular faith and holiness for many years, without this excess of joy, this assurance of God's love.* Believers are generally led on in a rational way of evidence and hope; and walking in the paths of holiness, having *good hope through grace*, hold fast an humble confidence unto the end. The extraordinary witness is exceeding rare and uncommon, at least in our days.

I proceed now to finish this Discourse, by offering to your thoughts a few advices concerning these witnessings of the Spirit of God, both in his ordinary and extraordinary ways.

1. Though you have never felt any such immediate influences of the Spirit of God, giving you an extraordinary assurance of your interest in his love, yet *have a care of ridiculing and reproaching* these peculiar and uncommon operations of the Holy Spirit: *Take heed of pronouncing them all at once the delusions of the devil, the visions of an heated fancy, or vain and idle dreams.* It is certain that

that God has bestowed some such favours on men in the primitive days of Christianity. It is certain also, that there is no place of scripture that declares, that these influences are utterly ceased, or that God will bestow no more such divine favours. It is certain yet further, that wise, and judicious, and holy men, have had very extraordinary impressions of this kind made on their souls, so that they were almost constrained to believe that they were divine; and the effects of these impressions have been holy and glorious: We should set a guard therefore on our hearts and our tongues, lest we cast a reproach and scandal on such sacred appearances, which the Spirit of God will hereafter acknowledge to have been his own work.

2. *Let not humble Christians, who walk with God according to the ordinary methods of his grace, be discouraged, though they have never found this extraordinary witness of the Spirit, nor tasted of these peculiar favours.* Value the evident marks and characters of the children of God, wrought in your hearts, more than ecstasies of joy and pleasure. Value mortification to sin more than raptures; for mortification is a certain sign that the Spirit of God dwells in us, and that we are heirs of life. Rom. viii. 13. ‘If you by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.’ Heaven is the place of complete joy; heaven is the state where sight and sense shall

shall be exercised; but we are here ordained to *live by faith*, 2 Cor. v. 7. We may have the assisting presence of the Spirit of adoption, and by that Spirit may say unto God, *Abba, Father*, without the extraordinary witnessing of that good Spirit.

3. *Dare not to believe any sudden raptures to proceed from this extraordinary testimony of the Holy Spirit, unless you find some considerable measure of those sanctifying effects of them which I have described.* I have granted that, in particular seasons of trial, when the natural spirits sink and fail, and temptations are exceeding strong, God may give this immediate testimony, on purpose to bear up the soul from sinking; yet we should not dare to trust such sort of vehement impressions, and pronounce them divine, if we neither find any of the plain scriptural marks of the children of God upon us, before or after these impressions. There is great danger of depending upon such raptures, if they leave no evident and lasting effects of sanctification behind them. Where the Spirit shines with such a divine light, he will warm the heart with uncommon love, and the soul must be conscious of some such rational evidence of adoption, such a love to God in the heart, as will effectually prove that God has first loved us.

Perhaps this is one reason why some Christians fall under so many doubts and fears,
because

because they live more upon their inward sensations of joy, their transports of pleasure in religion, which they call the extraordinary witness of the Spirit, than they do upon the characters of the children of God, which should be written in their hearts, and by which they should endeavour to search out and to evidence their interest in the favour of God.

4. Let every believer walk humbly before God, in all the paths of holiness. *Take heed lest at any time you resist the Blessed Spirit in his sanctifying influences, lest he withdraw your comforts of every kind.* Be not deceived, for the Spirit of God will not be trifled with. If you sow to the flesh, after you have received any of the witnessings of the Spirit, you may expect to reap desertions, sorrow, pains, and long mourning. Keep a conscience tender, and afraid of every sin; grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption, Eph. iv.

5. *Wait on God in all his holy ordinances, and wait for the manifestations of his love.* It is in a regular attendance on the public and private duties of religion, that we may hope to meet with the witnessing Spirit; there the principles of grace are wont to be awakened, and called forth into lively exercise; and where your love to God your Father, and to Jesus your Saviour, is excited, and your souls exert themselves as becomes the children

dren of God, you have most reason to expect the presence of the Holy Spirit, to bear witness to your adoption, and to your interests in his love. He will never bestow consolations of an ordinary or extraordinary kind, where there is a wilful neglect of the duties he has prescribed. *Frequent the services of his holy temple, the out-goings of God our King are in his sanctuary. His power and glory, his grace and kindness, are made visible in his house.* There has he promised his own presence; and where his presence is, he often brings with him the witnessing Spirit.



AN

E S S A Y

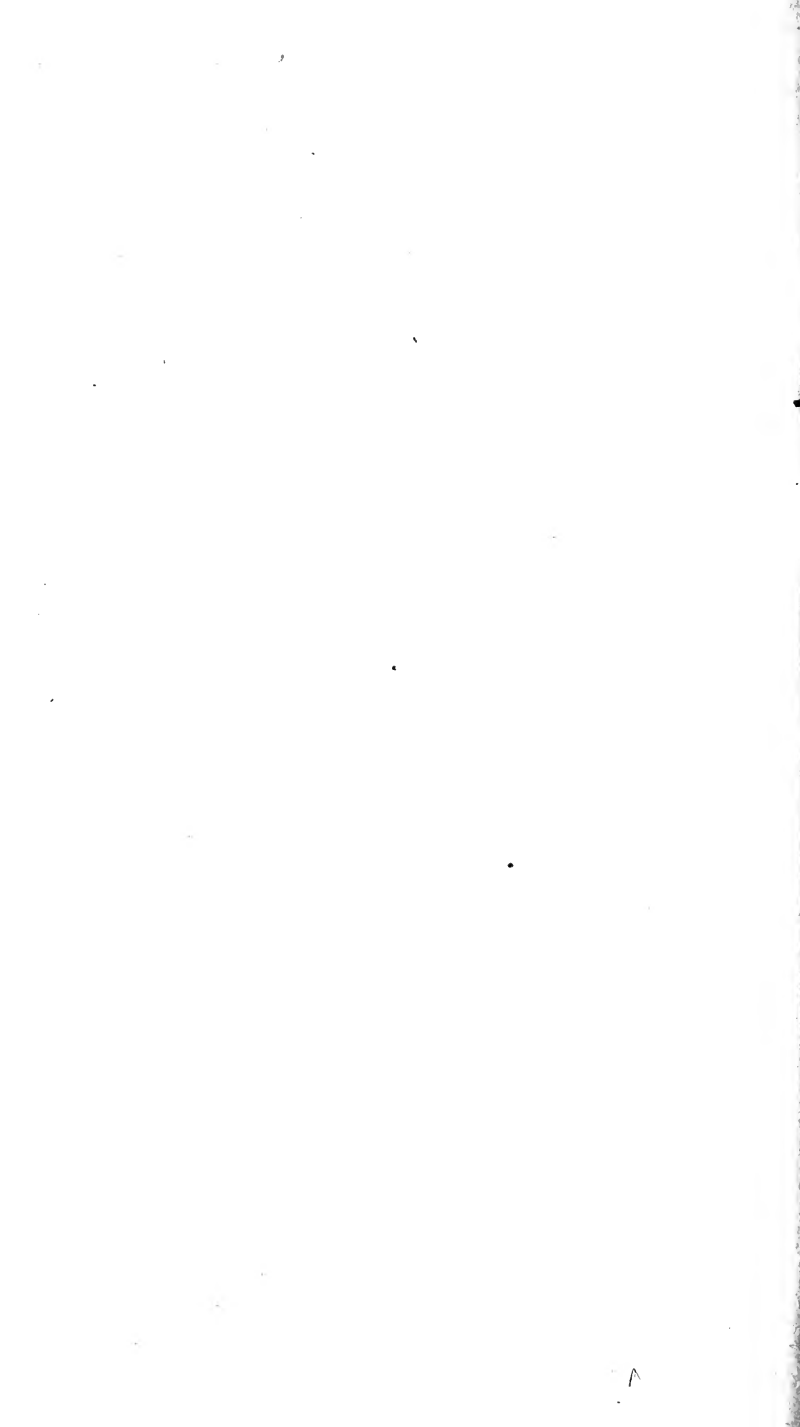
ON THE

POWERS AND CONTESTS

OF

FLESH AND SPIRIT.







THE
POWERS AND CONTESTS
OF
FLESH AND SPIRIT.
AN
ESSAY.

IT is agreed by all the more sober and thinking part of the world, that *man is a compounded creature*; and it is made evident from this plain and easy observation, (*viz.*) that he puts forth hourly such different kinds of action as one simple being could never perform. *Flesh* and *spirit* are the two ingredients that go to the composition; yet they keep their own natures still distinct, unmingled, and unconfounded. By the *flesh*

we eat, drink, walk, and sleep, and are a-kind to brute animals; by the *spirit* we think, know, and chuse, and hold kindred with angels.

It appears to every careful observer, that each of these parts of the man have their particular and distinct natures, qualities, and operations.

The *flesh*, or body, includes in it the limbs, blood, and breath, with all the grosser and finer materials, solid or fluid; that make up the animal; it has many inward ferments and appetites of its own; it has several visible, as well as hidden motions; and it receives various impressions, made by outward objects of sense, which are proper to itself, and in which the spirit has no share.

On the other hand, the soul or *spirit* includes the understanding and will, which are its chief powers: It has its thoughts and conceptions, its judgments and reasonings, its acts of choice, aversion, and desire, in great variety; which are peculiarly its own, and belong not to the *flesh*.

But while we dwell in this present world, there is such a near and special union between *soul* and *body*, that there are very few operations or affections of the *mind*, which do not receive a sensible turn or influence from the qualities and ferments, the impressions, powers, and passions, of *flesh* and *blood*.

Sometimes

Sometimes these animal motions attend or follow the acts or exercises of the *mind*, and yet even then they increase them in many cases: so when the *soul* is ashamed, the blood flushes in the face, and the shame is doubled; when the *spirit* is angry, the cheeks kindle, or grow pale, and the inward wrath burns fiercer. So in a fit of fear, the blood retires, the flesh trembles, the natural spirits flutter, or sink into faintness, and the soul is more terrified and overwhelmed.

At other times these inward ferments of the juices of the *body* are entirely beforehand with the *soul*; these motions or impressions of the *flesh*, and sense, and animal nature, may first awaken, and then maintain the anger, or fear, or love, or other affections of the *mind*.

Thus most of the actions of man in this present state are of a mixed nature, wherein both *flesh* and *spirit* concur, and each perform their several parts; though in such a manner, that, in many cases, it is hard to say how far the *flesh* and how far the *spirit* have their distinct shares of influence. Yet there is one excellent and unfailing *rule* to judge of this matter, if we could but always apply it right; and that is, *Whatsoever knowledge, consent, or choice, is in any action, belongs to the mind; and what implies mere matter, shape, or proper motion, must be attributed to the body.*

These appetites and affections of human nature, which are the mingled operations of *flesh* and *spirit*, are either lawful, sacred, or sinful; and they are *properly* and *formally* so called, partly according to the different objects of them, and partly according to their various degrees, or some other circumstances of time or place, that may attend them; as will be made evident by such instances as these. Thus it will appear, that the same action or passion may be determined to be lawful, sacred, or sinful, if it be exercised toward different objects, or in different degrees. Thus it is lawful to be *hungry* and *thirsty*, and to desire proper food, bread and wine; and to desire, with faith and holy affections, to eat the bread and drink the wine at the Lord's supper, is a sacred action. But to covet that meat or drink, that bread, or that wine, which belongs to another man, is sinful; for it is a violation of the tenth command, and becomes a transgression. So to fear the great God, or to love him, is a sacred affection. To fear a robber, or a roaring lion, or to *love* my house, or my servant, are very lawful affections: But if my *love* or my *fear* of any creature exceeds my *fear* or my *love* of God my Creator, it becomes hereby sinful. It is lawful, or rather it is religious and holy, to be *angry*, to *bate*, and to be *ashamed*, when sin is the object of these passions; but to be *ashamed* of virtue and religion,

religion, where I am called to profess them, or to *bate* my neighbour, or even mine enemy, or *to be angry* without a cause, or above a proper degree, are all criminal passions, and render a man guilty before God.

The mere motions and ferments of *flesh* and *blood*, or whatsoever share mere animal nature has in these actions or affections of the man, can have no *moral good* or *evil* in them, considered apart from the soul; nor are they *properly* called lawful or sinful in themselves; for they are the pure operations of brutal matter, till the *soul* or the *will* indulges them, or approves them, commands them, or complies with them. Yet if the objects of these fleshly motions be forbidden by the laws of God, or if the degree be excessive, or the time or place unlawful, then these motions and ferments of the flesh may be called sinful; not *formally* in themselves, but *occasionally*; because the soul so often complies with them, and becomes guilty; and thus these operations of the *flesh* are sad occasions to sin.

Now in this present fallen state, wherein all the children of Adam are found, these sinful motions and ferments, appetites and passions, abound in our *flesh* and *blood*; partly as we derive too much of them from our sinful parents, and partly as we have too much encouraged and strengthened them ourselves, by frequent practice and indulgence.

It is evident also, that the greatest part of the actions of our lives are ready to be influenced by appetite or affection; and it is plain, that the outward senses of the body, or the inward ferments, motions, and impressions of flesh and blood have so large a share in them, that they are called the *deeds of the body*, the *desires*, *lusts*, and *affections of the flesh*, in many places of scripture; thence it comes to pass that our *flesh* becomes the chief cause and occasion of sin to the soul.

Now though it be difficult (as I have hinted) in many particular actions, to determine precisely how far the influence of the *flesh* reaches, and how far it is the act of the *mind* or *spirit*, yet it is of great use in the Christian life to search into these matters, in order to find how far our actions are criminal and guilty, that we may abase our souls before God, and take shame to ourselves so far as we are culpable; and on the other hand, that from a melancholy or superstitious mistake, we may not charge ourselves with more guilt than God charges us with, or lay heavier loads upon our own consciences than the divine law lays upon us.

We shall find these enquiries also of excellent use to lead us to proper methods for the mortification of sin, and to show us the justice and wisdom of divine conduct, and the holiness and beauty of the providence of God,

God, in appointing our present state of trial, in order to a future judgment.

The first thing I shall discourse on here, is the unhappy influence that our flesh, or animal nature, has to tempt us to sin. And then

Idly, I shall shew what powers the soul is furnished with to resist the sinful motions of the flesh, and to maintain the sacred warfare.

This is the Proposition therefore that I shall first lay down in my Discourse; (*viz.*) That *the principles, springs, and occasions of our sinful actions, lie very much in the flesh; and these have a fatal and unhappy influence to lead the soul or spirit into sin.*

I shall make this evident from the word of God, especially from the writings of the blessed apostles; and shall confirm it by many common observations, and an easy train of reasoning.

When those sacred writers have occasion to describe sin, in its principles or operations, they use the words *flesh, fleshly, or carnal, the body, or the members*, with much freedom and frequency. St. Peter speaks of *walking after the flesh*; 2 Pet. ii. 20. of *alluring men by the lusts of the flesh*; 2 Pet. ii. 18. of *fleshly lusts, that war against the soul*, 1 Pet. ii. 11. St. Paul bids us *mortify the deeds of the body*;
Rom.

Rom. viii. 12. and he calls the principle of sin *the body of death*, Rom. vii. 24. He speaks of *sin reigning in our mortal bodies*, Rom. vi. 12. He places the sinful principles (which he calls the *law of sin*) in our very members, Rom. vii. 23. And particular sins he calls *our members*, Col. iii. 5. And in correspondence with him, the apostle James speaks of *lusts that war in our members*, Ja. iv. 1. And John and Jude make mention of the *lusts of the flesh, and garments spotted with the flesh*. And there are few words more frequent on St. Paul's tongue than the word *flesh*, when he would signify *sin*; the mortification whereof he calls *crucifying the flesh, with its affections and lusts*, Gal. v. 24. He names *adultery, fornication, idolatry, hatred, envy, murder, drunkenness, revellings*, and such like, *the works of the flesh*, Gal. v. 19. Persons in a sinful state are said *to be in the flesh*, Rom. viii. 3, 9. A course of sinning is called *sowing to the flesh, living after the flesh, minding the things of the flesh, walking after the flesh, fulfilling the desires and lusts of the flesh*, in several parts of his epistles.

Both in sanctified and un sanctified persons, sin, in the judgment of St. Paul, lies very much in the flesh, as to the springs, principles, and occasions of it. See Rom. vii. 5. compared with the 18th and 25th verses. In Rom. vii. 5. St. Paul speaks concerning the natural and unregenerate state: *When we*
were

were in the flesh, i. e. all flesh, no spirit, i. e. no spiritual life, then the motions of sin did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death. And when he speaks concerning himself in a regenerate state, at the end of that chapter, he describes sin still as having its occasion and cause much seated in the flesh. See 18th and 25th verses: *I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind. With my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin.* So that, considering himself either in a natural or in a regenerate state, still he supposes the great occasion of sinful actions to proceed from the flesh.

I confess that in some places of the New Testament, and perhaps in several of these which I have now cited, the word *flesh* may be used something *figuratively*, to signify *all the principles of sin that are in human nature*, whether they immediately reside in the mind, or in the body, as the subject; but the *figure* itself seems to be borrowed from this very sentiment, *That the flesh, with its affections and appetites towards fleshly objects, is the chief spring and occasion of sin.*

I might add also, that there are some other places of scripture, where the word *flesh* must necessarily be taken in a literal and proper sense, denoting the body to be the seat or spring of many sinful affections;

as Eph. ii. 3. where the *desires of the flesh* are distinguished from the *sinful desires of the mind*. And 2 Cor. i. 7. where both the *filthiness of flesh and spirit* is mentioned; and there are very few places which will not allow us to understand it in a literal sense. And it is evident to any one who compares the various parts of the writings of this apostle, that he speaks ten times of the *body*, the *flesh*, or the *members*, as the springs of sin, where he once mentions the *lusts of the mind*; intimating, that the far greatest part of the sins of men are derived from their *flesh*, and are owing to their compliance with the *sinful desires or affections of the body*.

I would not be mistaken here, as if I supposed the flesh to be the only *immediate* spring of all our sins; though, perhaps, it is the *original*, and remote spring of all, as I shall shew presently: But the soul of man, being once depraved, has many *sinful qualities* in it; the understanding and the will, the very *mind and conscience*, are *defiled*, Tit. i. 15. The soul itself has some propensities to things that are forbidden, as well as *sinful aversions* to God, and things holy and heavenly. There are the *lusts of the mind* as well as *lusts of the flesh*. There is a *filthiness both of flesh and spirit*. The devils, who have no flesh and blood belonging to them, are vile sinners; these are called *spiritual wickednesses in high places*, Eph. vi. 12. or, as it may

may be translated, *wicked spirits in heaventics*; that is, in the airy regions: So the spirit of man has sins of its own, that it borrows not immediately from the flesh: There is a pride in the mind, arising from learning, and intellectual powers, and accomplishments; there are vain and excessive desires of human knowledge; there is a sinful curiosity, prying into secret futurities; there is a glorying in self, a vanity of mind, and self-confidence, instead of trusting in God, and giving him the glory of all: There is, indeed, a secret dislike and aversion to God and holiness, in the soul of every un sanctified sinner; these are more spiritual iniquities.

I might add also, that there are several of those sins which, in some appearances of them, are numbered among the *works of the flesh*, (because they are often excited, and almost always increased, by the humours and ferments of the body;) which yet, in some other operations and appearances, begin in the spirit, belong chiefly to the soul, and must be called *spiritual sins*, or *lusts of the mind*; such as malice and envy, self-conceit, emulation, hatred of good men, &c. which are doubtless found in the fallen angels, those evil spirits, who have no flesh about them. Now as an un sanctified soul may be sometimes guilty of these when in the body, so, when it is dismissed from flesh, we must grant, that it would be filled with all these iniquities

iniquities, these spiritual lusts, for ever, tho' none of the carnal sins, no appetites to fleshly objects, should follow it into the separate state.

But the point which I propose to prove is this, that though there may be several sins that arise chiefly from the mind, yet there are multitudes of disorderly appetites, sinful inclinations and aversions, as well as violent immoderate tendencies towards lawful objects, seated in our animal nature, in our flesh and blood, in this mortal part of our frame and composition, wherein we are akin to the beasts that perish; and it is by the senses, by these sensitive motions and ferments of flesh and blood, that the human soul is most frequently led into temptation and sin: And more especially I may venture to say, that the soul of a true Christian, which is sanctified by the Spirit of God, and has a new and heavenly temper and bias, and a *divine nature given it*, owes most of its actual transgressions to the flesh, and the lusts thereof, to which it is united in the present state.

There is one *objection* that seems necessary to be answered; and that is drawn from the words of our Saviour, Mark vii. 21, 23. *For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, &c. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.* Now some person may say, it is evident, that by the *heart* he did not

not mean that inward bowel so called, but the *soul* itself; because, according to the vulgar philosophy, and common sentiments of the Jews, the soul of man had its chief residence in the heart; and upon this account they attributed to the heart the several affections and inward operations of the soul, whether they were sinful or holy; and in this sense our Saviour may be supposed to attribute to the soul, or spirit in man, all these wickednesses.

But it is easy to solve this difficulty two ways.

1st, That neither the philosophy of the Jews, nor the common language which our Saviour used, did make any nice distinction in those principles of human actions, what share the *spirit* had in them, and what the *flesh*; but they used the word *heart* for all those inward powers of the man whence outward actions proceeded; and this because the springs and motions of the blood and life, as well as the ferments of several passions, were found there: So that our Saviour using the common language of the people, does by no means exclude the inward ferments of the flesh from their share in these sinful actions; but rather includes them in the word *heart*.

2dly, If we could suppose the word *heart* in this place to signify merely the *soul* or *spirit*, yet it would by no means exclude the inward ferments of the flesh from being the

first springs and occasions of many of these sinful practices; for they do not become *sins* till the soul has consented to them; nor can they break forth into outward acts without the command, or, at least, the sinful compliance of the soul. Thus all those actions that may justly be called *evil* and *wicked*, such as Christ here mentions, proceed from the soul, so far as they are truly and properly sinful; and yet the first secret occasions and incentives of many of them may spring very much from the powers of the flesh.

Now as I have made it to appear in some good measure, that the *springs and principles of sin lie very much in our fleshly natures*, from the frequent expressions of holy scripture, so it may be made yet more evident still, by these following considerations, drawn from reason, observation, and experience.

1. Consider how *different are the sins of men, according to their peculiar constitutions of flesh and blood*. These may be called the *sins that easily beset us*, Heb. xii. 1. because our temper and constitution is always present with us.

Those that are of a brisk and sanguine make, whose blood flows high and vigorous, how often are they tempted by the gay scences of life, to pursue vanity, and to indulge forbidden pleasures? Luxury and intemperance are their peculiar vices: They follow after carnal mirth with eager gust, as well as with
long

long forgetfulness of God, and of things spiritual. By this means they indulge a fatal security, and groundless presumption of long life here, or happiness hereafter, being ever animated by lively sensual fancies, appetites, and passions.

On the other hand, those that have melancholy humours mingled with their natural constitution, are inclined to sullen vices, to an unsociable and uncharitable behaviour among men, as well as they are often tempted under the influence of these prevailing humours of the body, to despair of the mercies of God, and, upon this account, to abandon all religion.

Some have a greediness of desire wrought into the very frame of their natures; and these are inclined to selfish and covetous iniquities, and often are found hard-hearted and uncompassionate to the necessities and cries of the poor.

Others are sour and peevish in their native temper, having an excess of sharp juices mingled with their flesh and blood; and these are easily awakened to sudden wrath and resentment, and kindled into a flame of sinful anger upon the first and slightest provocation.

I might instance in several other qualities of the constitution, whereby multitudes of iniquities arise amongst men, and sufficiently discover that the flesh is a most fruitful spring

of temptations, and a constant occasion of sin.

2dly, Consider *how many particular sins we may be inclined to, by reason of some sudden distemper of body, or long and habitual diseases that attend flesh and blood.*

When the four or acid humours in animal nature rise to an irregular height, or when the body is frequently exercised with sharp and tedious pains, even a well-tempered man becomes peevish and fretful; he vexes his own spirit with impatience; he murmurs against the hand of God; and this secret uneasiness, (though it dares not appear in visible rage against his Creator) yet it cannot contain itself in silence, but breaks out with too much evidence and guilt, quarrelling with his fellow-creatures round about him: He tires out his best friends with perpetual disquietude; he loses his meek and gentle temper; and the man that was wont to be always pleased and easy, now repents every thing, and scarce any body can please him.

This appears with bright evidence to be occasioned by bodily disorders; for even our natural hunger makes us peevish: When sharp and corrosive juices prey upon the stomach itself, for want of food, how touchy and fretful does our temper grow, till a good meal provides matter for those digestive juices to act upon; then the flesh grows easy, and the good humour returns.

But

But to pursue the observation concerning diseases.

When the natural spirits are reduced very low by long weakness, how cold and unactive are some good men? When phlegmatic humours prevail in the body, how slothful are some Christians in every duty? How backward to all active services of God or man? Even those very persons who were once chearful and zealous, and ready to every good work.

After the same manner, when, through distemper of body, black and melancholy juices get the ascendant over the more sprightly animal powers, how often do we find persons of a sweet affable behaviour grow fullen and unfociable? Those who were fond of company and conversation seek dark corners, and solitary chambers of retirement; they grow listless to every diversion, and will hardly admit a visitant, or give answers to the common questions of life.

Again, When the powers of nature are broken by continual diseases, the man of courage becomes fearful, and starts aside from duty, at every appearing difficulty: The man of faith gives in to fears and doubts, to perpetual unbelievings, and suspicious thoughts, with regard to the promises of God and all the encouragements of the gospel.

And to put this matter beyond all dispute, experience teaches us, that the very same

persons who have been fretful, peevish, slothful, fullen, or excessively timorous, under the influences of these several distempers of body; when, by the means of medicine, they have been restored to health, they have returned again to the chearful practices of those single and social virtues, which so long lay cramped, confined, and buried under the diseases of the flesh.

Now if the occasion of these several sorts of sins, both of omission and commission, did not chiefly arise from the flesh, why should the same Christian so remarkably find his whole temper and his conduct altered for the worse by the diseases of his body, and restored again by the recovery of his health?

3dly, *Consider how different are the sins of youth and old age*; how contrary are their several temptations.

The youth delights in gay company, public vanities, sensual amusements, luxury, and profuseness; he contemns money, and despises his ease, to pursue with labour the gratifications of fancy and wanton appetite; and hereby he neglects all the duties of retirement, and serious thoughtfulness. The old man loves his ease above all things, except his money; he neglects and despises the pleasures of the flesh, and gay diversions; but he daily hoards up his gold for fear of want; and in counting over his treasure he wastes the latter hours of his life, which he should

should spend in a preparation for death at hand.

The youth fears nothing, and rushes on to guilt headlong; the old man is frightened at every thing, and shrinks back from the most necessary duties.

Whence are all these differences of sin? The natural philosopher will give happy hints toward the solving this question with ease and truth: He knows that one is occasioned by the florid blood, and juices, and active powers of young human nature; these hurry the soul on to pursue every fleshly delight. The other is owing to the languid and gross stagnant humours that mingle with the blood of old age: These render him dull and unactive; and his perpetual fears of want, and poverty, and of every other evil arise partly from the poor low state of those feeble spirits that attend that last and expiring period of life. The unholy soul is too easily influenced by both these extremes, in the different seasons of its dwelling in this mortal and sinful flesh; and the soul that is sanctified finds it hard work to resist.

4thly, Let us consider yet again, *how great a part of the sins of men arise from the presence of tempting sensible objects*; and these are conveyed to the mind by the sensitive powers of the flesh. What influence could the whole world of enticing objects have on the spirit, if the notices of them were not brought to

the spirit by the senses? The presence of alluring temptations strikes strongly on the outward organ of sense, awakens the carnal appetite, and with a powerful, an unhappy, and almost constraining force, persuades the soul to guilty practices and enjoyments. At other times it causes a sinful neglect of proper duties to God or man; or, at least, it calls in vain thoughts to mingle with our services, both civil and religious; and thus gives them a sensual taint, and pollutes and spoils them.

Particular circumstances of time and place, where sensual temptations attend us, become unhappy occasions of defiling the soul. And where is the time, or where the place, in which such objects or occasions are not to be found? The day-light opens before us the scenes of a vain world, crowded with ten thousand allurements to sin; nor can the shadows of the night conceal or banish those temptations that attack us at other avenues besides the eye. A wanton song, an immodest touch, the scent of dainty meats, or the remembered relish of delicious wine, are sufficient to provoke the fleshly appetites, and to inflame the soul to the pursuit of iniquity. Thus every sense has a hand in the conveyance of sin to the spirit.

Not the board, nor the bed, not the shop, nor the exchange; no, not the closet, nor the temples of worship, are secure from temptations that assault the soul, by means
of

of this wretched flesh. We are in danger when in the midst of company; nor are we safe when solitary and alone. How often have eyes and ears been the unhappy torches to kindle either unlawful love, or malice and revenge, according as a man hath been casually led within sight or hearing of the person that has allured him to pleasure, or put him to pain? Pictures and stories have many a time become fatal instruments of the same mischief. When we sit at a well-spread table, doth not our palate often tempt us to improper food, and to riot upon a beloved dish? We venture to taste of the luscious compound, even though we suspect, or are almost certain, it has sickness or disease lurking in it; and sometimes we indulge the freedom of appetite in the most wholesome provisions, to a vicious excess and surfeit. How many a wretch is enticed to become a glutton, or a drunkard, or to rush on to the pursuit of adultery and polluted pleasure, by his passing through some insnaring occurrences of life, and having the soul united to this sinful flesh? The wanton eye, and the greedy palate, are tempting engines, that draw the mind away to forbidden objects.

It is upon this account that our blessed Lord gives advice in his excellent sermon: *If thy right-eye offend thee, pluck it out; or, if thy right-hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast them both away from thee; for it is profitable for*

for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell, Matt. v: 29, 30. And though our Lord may be supposed here to speak metaphorically, and to bid us part with those beloved sins that are dear to us as an hand or an eye, yet he designs to teach us that the eye, and the hand, and the fleshly powers, may become wretched occasions of sin to us; and if there were no other way to avoid the danger, it is better to bear the pain of parting with those mischievous and offensive members, than yield to their temptations, and rush on to guilt and eternal misery.

I might here also take notice, that the very presence of all sorts of corporeal objects, even the most necessary, and the most innocent, may become occasions of sin at special seasons; as, when we are engaged in any part of divine worship, the common and obvious appearances round about us, the walls, the doors, the windows, the furniture of the place, or the persons present, impress our senses, and often turn away the thoughts from the sacred work. We forget God to pursue the creature, even in his own awful presence, and in the midst of our solemn devotions. A curious ear shall wrap up the soul in the melody of the song, till it has lost the divine sense and meaning. A vain and wandering eye roves among the faces, the postures, and the dress of our fellow-worshippers,

shippers, and calls the mind away from prayer and devout attention. Oh how often does the criminal indulgence of these sensitive powers carry the soul afar off from God and religion! How does it break off many a holy meditation in a moment! What long intervals does it make in our addresses to our Creator, and interline our prayers with folly and sin! So, when we are employed in any business of the civil life, that is our proper present duty, our senses glance at some other object, and draw the soul away to a quite different work, which is sinful at that season; though perhaps it might be the duty of the next hour, or the proper business of the morrow. And where is the man that has not reason to complain often of this sort of temptations every day, while his spirit dwells in this house of flesh?

5thly, Consider further, *that most of the temptations that we meet with, even when the outward objects are absent, arise from the images of them remaining in the brain; which is (as it were) the shop, or storehouse, of the memory and the fancy.* The impressions which those objects made on the outward senses, when they were present, are conveyed to the brain, and laid up there, ready to appear at the first call of the mind, when these objects are withdrawn. But they oftentimes also start out unbidden, and a whole scene of wickedness is spread all over the imagination,
before

before the soul is aware; and sometimes when the soul expressly forbids it too: Then the corrupt appetites are kindled, and sinful passions awake again. Thus the temptations return, and sollicit the spirit to sin, even when the objects are afar off, and out of reach: For fancy and memory are but the pictures of sense; it is sight and hearing at second hand. Now if the soul seeks and calls for these tempting visions to appear, or if it indulges these impure exercises of the imagination; if it delights itself in these criminal ideas when they happen to arise, and please itself with these painted shapes of iniquity, then it too frequently repeats the sin, and renews its own guilt and defilement.

Such is the composition of our natures, that the images on the brain, the traces and footsteps of past sensations, and the springs of fancy and passion, are linked together by unknown and unperceived ties; so that, when one is touched and awakened, a whole train of images appears at once, and awakens all those fancies, and those guilty passions, which were linked and connected together when that leading image was first painted on the brain through the organs of sense. So one line of a comedy, or the door of the play-house, or the sound of an actor, or a hero's name, shall call over again all those alluring and mischievous scenes which first drew the heart away from God and religion, spoiled
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the labours of a pious education, and plunged the young sinner into early debaucheries.

Besides all these mischiefs that arise from the recollection of past occurrences, there is an infinite variety of new scenes of vice, that fancy can furnish out on the sudden, by mingling, joining, enlarging, multiplying, and compounding, the vicious images that the brain can supply it with. Thus in this shop of vanity, this workhouse of sin, and these secret chambers of imagery, new-devised iniquities are coined continually; new engines are forged every minute, by a busy and fruitful fancy, to charm the soul, and transport it to fresh guilt and ruin. Thus the treasury of the brain and those inward and hidden parts of the flesh, become many times as effectual occasions of sin, as all the outward senses joined together, and an army of tempting objects.

6thly, There is another consideration too, that will make it appear to any person of an enquiring and thoughtful genius, that sin has much of its seat and root in the flesh, if we do but reflect *how many iniquities we commit, which, in their outward appearance, are very nearly imitated by brute creatures, which have no intelligent spirit, no rational soul; whose blood is the very soul, spirit, and life of them, as the scripture speaks, Lev. xvii. 14. Eccl. iii. 21.*

Is there not something like *envy* working in a *dog*, when he forbids the ox from the crib, or the manger, and yet he neither wants nor tastes the hay nor the corn himself? Is he not the picture of *malice*, when he grins with fury, and grows mad with rage, against the harmless traveller? Does not the *wasp*, that little angry insect, fix a sting in us sometimes without any provocation? And thus it becomes the very image and proverb of *ill-nature* as well as the dog; so that men of such a temper are called *dogged* and *waspish*. Does not our Lord Jesus himself give Herod the name of a *fox* for the same reason, (*viz.*) because the craft, the plunder, and the various and bloody injuries which were practised by that man among his subjects, and are well presented by the natural actions of that subtle and mischievous animal, among his fellow-brutes. See Luke xiii. 32.

Is not the *swine* often overwhelmed with food by its own greediness? And does not that foul animal imitate the glutton well? You grant all this proceeds from the very make and frame, the blood and juices of these animals, and from the keenness, or other peculiar qualities of their natural spirits: And why may not the first motions and stirrings of the same vices in us proceed from the ferments of our blood too? Have you never observed the resemblance of *pride* working in a *peacock*, or a well fed *horse*;
how

how those brutal beings exult and glory, the one in his beauty, the other in his strength and his peculiar endowments? This proud ferment heaves and swells their bodily natures: And why may not some of our pride be supposed to begin there too?

I confess these animals have no rational mind in them, no thinking spirit, no will, either to resist or consent to these motions of the flesh and blood; so that they are under no moral law: These actions of theirs are agreeable to their original nature, and are under a divine appointment rather than a prohibition; therefore they are not capable of sin and guilt. But man, who hath these same animal motions and ferments of the flesh, and the same appetites, and springs of passion, had nothing vicious in his original frame and constitution, but derived all that is faulty from his first parents, who were wilful sinners, and who spoiled their whole nature; and upon this account he will hardly be found innocent.

But his guilt appears much more evident, when we consider that man has also an intelligent mind, a reasonable soul, capable, in some measure, of resisting these irregular tendencies of the flesh; therefore he becomes guilty in the sight of God, by wilful consent to them, and indulgence of them, contrary to the forbidding law of his Creator. Now this proposed contest between flesh and spirit

is ordained by God our Maker in infinite wisdom, to be a proper state of trial for us, in order to future rewards and punishments.

7thly, I might add, in the last place, another argument, to prove that our flesh is the chief occasion of sin to the soul, from this consideration; that *the soul at first is tainted, corrupted, or defiled, with original sin, by its union to sinful flesh.*

You will immediately enquire, How is this possible, since the soul is a pure spiritual being, created immediately by God himself, and therefore innocent and holy; and since it cannot touch, nor be touched, by any thing corporeal, such as flesh and blood? In what manner can the soul, though united to the body, receive any such sinful pollution, or sinful impression, from the body?

Take this account of it in short, in these few Propositions.

I. Though the spirit of man be incorporeal, and is created by God without depraved or sinful qualities in it, yet it never exists, or comes into being, but as a part of human nature; and that not as a piece of new workmanship, but as a part of mankind propagated from parents by the continued power of God's creating word; *Be fruitful, and multiply.* When the infant-body of man is so far formed as to become fit for union with a rational soul, the soul comes into existence in union with the body, by the original law
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of creation, and becomes a part of the man, as much as the breath, which is borrowed from the air, or the blood, which is made out of the food of the mother.

2. Thence it follows, that the soul is not to be judged of, or considered, as a single separate being, but as in union with flesh and blood, as making up a compound creature of the human species.

3. Since in the very first moment of its being, by the old and general rules or laws of creation and providence, it belongs to a human body, derived from Adam, it is esteemed as propagated by the parents, and it becomes hereby a son or a daughter of fallen man, and is naturally, by the law of creation, involved in the same circumstances of ruin, has no claim to preserving or securing grace, above the mere and untaught faculties of its intelligent nature.

Then 4thly, Since this body has many sinful ferments and irregular appetites in it, conveyed down from the original sinner, the new-made spirit being created and joined to the flesh, is perpetually impressed and allured by these motions, passions, and appetites of the flesh, and willingly complies with those that are criminal as well as those that are innocent; and thus the young creature contracts actual and personal guilt, perhaps, as soon as it is capable of exerting any actions

with understanding; and such as are properly human, and capable of moral differences.

Thus the soul is defiled by communion with the flesh; and, according to the original law of creation, which is called the covenant of God with Adam, it partakes of a sinful nature from degenerate parents, and by degrees becomes an actual sinner.

But I proceed no further on this Head, having delivered my sentiments in another place more at large, in the deep and difficult Controversy of original Sin; which may be best accounted for in this manner, as far as my judgment reaches.

What I have said here is sufficient to shew that, in the present state of human nature, *the flesh is the chief cause and occasion of sin to the soul.*

MEDITATION I.

AND are we tempted to sin so often by our fleshly powers? Then *how little should we reckon ourselves debtors to the flesh?* How much mischief has it already done us? And how much still have we reason to fear from its influences, as long as we continue to dwell in it!

Little do you think, O sinners; little do you think what an enemy you carest, while you pamper *the flesh*, and make provision to fulfil the lusts of it; it is a foe that sits close to
you,

you, and is a partner of your very natures; and thus it has a thouſand opportunities to do you miſchief, when other adverſaries are aſar off: It has done you already more injury than the devil and the world joined together; for in all the pernicious and ſecret ſnares which they have laid for your ſouls, and all the open attacks that they have made upon your virtue, or your peace, the fleſh has ever been an accomplice with them, and helped onward the fatal deſign; beſides the many guilty practices into which it has drawn you, without the aſſiſtance either of the world or the devil. Not all the deceitful vanities on the earth, nor all the armies of hell, could lead your ſouls aſtray from God, and your own happineſs, in half ſo many inſtances as they have done, if you had not ſuch a ſecret traitor ſo near you, that is in league with them for your ruin. And ſhall this enemy be your counſellor and your guide? Shall this fleſh be your chief darling, which has been ever warring againſt your ſoul?

Would you not diſtruſt a man that has dwelt with you from your childhood, and every day of your life has led you into ſome miſchief? Would you not be watchful and jealous of all his motions, who has betrayed you into ſome ſnare almoſt every hour? Would you not guard againſt his perverſe practices, if, whenever he took a walk with you, he had thrown you into a pit, and

defiled your garments? Such a dangerous attendant is this flesh of yours in the present degenerate state.

Why then will ye be so fond of this tempter, this deceitful companion? Why will you spend your best moments, the prime of youth, and the very flower of life, to dress and adorn, to flatter, and please, and gratify, such a wretched traitor to your soul, such a foe to your eternal welfare? The very best of men have already given too much respect to it. But when a person is sanctified by divine grace, the flesh begins then to be subdued to some useful services to God: Then the eye by reading, and the ear by hearing, and the feet by going to attend upon the divine word, are made to help forward his spiritual and heavenly interest; and many a hundred services of this kind must the members of the body do, in order to make the soul any tolerable recompense for all the injuries that the soul has received from its corrupt appetites and passions. Well therefore might the apostle say, *We are by no means debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh,* Rom. viii. 12. Nor do we owe any more of our strength, time, thought, or contrivance, to gratify its vain or sinful inclinations; for *they that are Christ's have so far crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts of it, as to keep it under, and hold it in subjection,* that
it

it may not get the mastery over the soul, Gal. v. 24. and 1 Cor. ix. 27.

Nourish and support the flesh, that is your duty: Heal it when it is sick, and endeavour to preserve it in health, that it may be a proper servant to the spirit. It was made for this end; and the soul should know its own dignity, and keep the body in its place: But dare not pamper it with too much fondness, lest it usurp the dominion, and cause the soul to *walk after it* in the sinful appetites and inclinations thereof; which is quite contrary to the character of the saints, as they are described by the apostle, Rom. viii. 1. *Those that are in Christ Jesus, to whom there is no condemnation, walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

MEDITATION II.

IS the body such a foul and wretched spring of sin? Then what a heaven of purity and pleasure is provided for the children of God at their death, and is contained in those few words of the apostle, *Absent from the body*, 2 Cor. v. 8. When a child of Adam has received a new nature by the new-creating power of the Holy Spirit, and is become a son or daughter of God, it is thenceforward, as it were, a prisoner in this untoward mansion of flesh and blood: It is in a state of perpetual conflict, yet it cannot

change these old sensual appetites, nor correct at once these long habits of irregular desire. It labours daily in this work; it maintains a vigorous warfare against the flesh; but, through the power of sensible enticing objects all around us, it is too often carried away into sinful compliances. O wretched man that I am, saith the apostle, what an unhappy law, or spring of sin, is there in my members, that carries me away from the better dictates of the law of my renewed mind, and bears me captive to the law of sin that is in my flesh! O wretched man indeed! And who shall deliver me? O blessed hour of death, that shall break the chain, and set the prisoner free! O sweet and glorious moment of release from this body, which tainted my spirit early with its poisonous influences; and, by drawing me away perpetually by its dangerous attachments to things sensible, has kept me long at a painful distance from my God.

T H E

I M P R O V E M E N T .

THE former part of this Discourse proposed this sentiment, (*viz.*) *That the principles and springs, or occasions of sin, lie chiefly in our bodily natures, in our flesh and blood:* And as I have made this to appear from several places of scripture, so I have proved it from rational observations; (*viz.*) how great an influence the different constitutions of mankind, their casual distempers, and their various ages of life, have upon the soul, to incline it to the practice of different sins; and all these are plainly derived from flesh and blood. I have considered further, what sinful actions arise from the presence of tempting objects impressing the senses; and when the images of them are treasured up in the brain, they become the seeds of impure imagination and sinful appetite. Many of our sins also are nearly imitated by the brutes that perish, whose blood is their life and soul; and even original sin itself is conveyed to us by the flesh.

Hence we may learn to judge aright concerning several cases of difficulty in the Christian life, relating to sins and temptations, and find an answer to some practical questions of great importance.

Quest. I. *Whether the first start or motion of our nature towards unlawful objects is properly sinful, and brings guilt upon the soul?*

Answer. The mere ferments of the blood and spirits, the appetites and motions, that belong purely and only to the flesh, and spring entirely from it, are not properly sins; because the flesh, considered in itself, is but mere matter: Now mere matter, whether it were united to a rational mind or no, would be thus moved and acted by natural springs and impressions, and is under no moral law; and *where no law is there is no transgression.* The brutal or animal nature, abstracted from the soul, is not capable of knowledge or will, consent or dissent; but the first moment that the soul indulges or consents to any of these irregular ferments, these springs of unruly passion in the blood, and yields to these inordinate appetites of the flesh, it commits sin; as soon as it complies with any of these desires, that are contrary to its duty, the soul becomes guilty in the sight of God; for the proper notion of sin is the tendency of an intelligent being to things disagreeable to the divine law; the practice of what is forbidden, or the neglect of what is commanded.

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If the eye beholds food, though the man be affured there is hidden poiſon in it, yet the hungry ſtomach will have a natural appetite toward it, and this is not ſinful; but if the ſoul comply, and the man eats it, or deſires to eat it, he breaks the ſixth command, which forbids all murder. Our Saviour has ſufficiently decided this part of the controverſy in his ſermon on the mount, that the ſoul's very deſire and conſent to ſin is ſinful, Matth. v. 27. And the fuller and ſtronger the conſent of the will is, and the further it goes on to encourage or impel the body to the forbidden action, ſo much greater is the ſin.

When our bleſſed Saviour ſpake theſe words, *He that looketh upon a woman, to luſt after her, hath committed adultery already in his heart,* it cannot be ſuppoſed that he intended to give a law that ſhould make the inward motions or ferments of mere animal nature ſinful; for theſe were not originally and naturally ſubject to the immediate command of the ſoul in the ſtate of innocency, ſo as to be raiſed or prevented abſolutely and immediately by the will, as the motion of the hand or foot is. But his deſign is to ſhew, that the ſoul itſelf inwardly conſenting to theſe animal ferments and motions, or encouraging or indulging them but one moment, is really ſinful in the ſight of God, even though the man did never proceed to the
outward

outward and actual commission of those sins in the flesh: And hereby he vindicated the law of God from those narrow and corrupt expositions which the scribes, and doctors, and interpreters of those days put upon it, who would allow nothing to be sinful but the outward act.

This will appear with fuller evidence, if we consider that there might be in the flesh of innocent Adam, some natural appetites towards objects that might be forbidden by the express and positive law of God; for the flesh, merely considered in itself, has a natural propensity to things that please and gratify it, without any regard to the unseen circumstances or moral relations of things; without any respect to a law that permits or prohibits them. Thus Adam, or his partner, might feel an innocent inclination in their animal natures, towards any fruit in the garden that *was pleasant to the eyes, and good for food*, even to that of the tree of knowledge: And this indeed was necessary, in order to make a proper state of trial; and it was fit and becoming divine wisdom, to appoint such a tree to be the test of their obedience. Now while they continued innocent, the soul resisted this inclination of the flesh, under a sense that the fruit was forbidden; but the first moment that they indulged the flesh in this irregular appetite, or consented to it, they made themselves transgressors;

transgressors; then their nature was corrupted; thus they eat the unlawful food, and became the parents of a sinful race.

The chief differences therefore in this matter, betwixt innocent and fallen man, are these:

(1.) That it is probable his flesh might have no natural inclination to objects apparently hurtful in themselves, but to such only as might be made unlawful by some attending circumstances, or by an express and positive law. And

(2.) These inclinations also, perhaps, were but few, and feeble, in comparison of the multitudes of violent appetites, and irregular desires, that are found in our degenerate natures, to all sorts of unlawful objects. And

(3.) That his soul had power in itself, by due consideration, to resist and subdue these appetites of the flesh, though not absolutely to prevent them; whereas, in our present corrupt state, we are soon transported and hurried away into a sinful compliance with them: The spirit is ready to yield as soon as it feels the temptations of the body; so that there are scarce any such inordinate ferments or propensities arising or stirring in our flesh and blood, but the soul more or less consents to them in some degree.

Thus, though the first motions towards sin that are in our members, are not in themselves properly sinful, nor is the sense or
perception

perception of the mind sinful neither, for this is natural and necessary, according to the composition of human nature, if the mind were never so holy: Yet these motions seldom arise in our members (especially in an unregenerate state,) but the soul is defiled, and becomes guilty; and that is by some consent of will, some degree of indulgence to them, or compliance with them. Well then may we cry out with the Psalmist, Psal. xix. 12. *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse us, O Lord, from the multitudes of our transgressions, and the millions of our iniquities: Cleanse us from secret offences, and keep us free from presumptuous sins.*

Question II. Whether all impure imaginations and blasphemous thoughts are properly sinful; and render us guilty before God?

Answer. It is possible that some peculiar qualities of the constitution, some distempered humours of the body, or some sort of improper food, may excite impure images on the brain; and this is often done also by the casual and unavoidable, occurrences of human life. An indecent picture, an immodest or profane song, or the vile, the impious, or uncleanly language of the wicked world, may spread a dangerous scene over the fancy. The devil also is a watchful and a busy adversary, and we know not what secret power he has to draw evil pictures on the brain, to
write

write blasphemy there, or to awaken some old traces of immorality. The powers and devices of wicked spirits are a great and unsearchable secret to us, who dwell in the flesh. He may buzz into the ear some impious syllables, or lewd and profane sounds, especially when his chain is a little lengthened, and he has a divine permission to approach human nature.

But all these things that I have here described may be impressed on the animal powers of an innocent person: The soul may have a very painful perception of all this without actual sin, supposing still, that it strives and *wrestles* both against its own *flesh and blood*, and against *those principalities and powers of darkness*; supposing that it fights, and watches, and prays for divine aid, and uses all the holy armour and the weapons of sacred appointment, to fence against these assaults of fleshly and spiritual enemies, these sore invasions of its holiness and peace.

I confess it is hard, in this fallen and imperfect state, to be thus attacked on any side, without some degree of compliance in an unguarded moment; and especially if we are beset on all sides, and assaulted by the flesh, the world, and the devil, at once. It is seldom or never that the best of men can pass through such a scene of conflict and sharp trial, without something of defilement.

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Our Saviour himself indeed was assaulted by Satan, and by the world; but the *prince of darkness found nothing within him to promote or assist his temptations*, John xiv. 30. But he finds so much tinder in our nature, ready to catch fire, and blaze, at every spark of iniquity, that it is scarce possible we should pass through such dangerous hours of contest, and keep our spirits pure and unpolluted.

Yet still it must be determined, that where there is perpetual resistance, and no manner of indulgence of these vicious scenes, where there is no consent of the will to them, nor a neglect of any proper and appointed means to oppose and suppress them, there is no sin.

Let this be a word of consolation and sacred encouragement to those poor melancholy Christians who are sorely buffeted by Satan, and his hellish suggestions, or are vexed with the wild and unruly insults of fancy, under some distemper of the flesh. Let them enquire whether these evil thoughts be not their constant burthen; whether it is not their daily and hourly toil of spirit, to suppress and cast them out; whether they do not make this the matter of their holy complaint and mourning before God night and day; whether they are not wrestling hard with these adversaries of their peace, and pleading hard at the mercy-seat, for
grace

grace to resist and subdue them: Then let them take the same encouragement that St. Paul does, who is an excellent example both of such sufferings, and of such hope and consolation. 2 Cor. xii. 7—10. He had a *thorn in the flesh*; he had an *angel of Satan sent to buffet him*; he *besought the Lord thrice*; *i. e.* often and earnestly, for deliverance: And though God did not answer him immediately by a full release from the temptation, yet he afforded him such a *sufficiency of grace*, that he could glory in hope of final victory. Nor did he call the *buffetings of Satan*, nor the *thorn in the flesh*, his own sins; but *his infirmities*, which he durst even glory in, from his great assurance of the grace of Christ, to assist him in the combat, verse 9.

I have written this to prevent the humble holy soul, that lies under these exercises, from charging itself with more guilt than the law or justice of God charges it with: Let such a one also take comfort from those words of the apostle, as *there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh*, in the course of their lives, so there is no guilt in such instances of sinful imagination, where there is no indulgence.

Yet here it is necessary to take notice, that some persons have heretofore given so criminal an indulgence to their sensual lusts, or
have

have been so freely engaged in profane or immoral conversation in their younger years, that they have tainted their fancy with many foul and impious representations, inscribed it with vicious words and images, and lodged a fatal treasure of iniquity there. They have often recalled these scenes with so much delight, that when divine grace has been pleased to awaken them to a sense of their folly, and give a pious turn to their souls, they have been many years perplexed with the vile workings of imagination: These scenes of iniquity have returned unbidden, and risen up incessantly, in spite of all their sacred labour to abolish them: These have filled their spirits with sorrow and perpetual anguish; and there is just reason they should deeply humble themselves before God on this account. For though it is possible such wicked thoughts may be suggested to holy souls, who have kept themselves in their youth from this sort of defilement; yet when persons themselves have been so far accessory to their own guilt and misery, they ought to take fresh occasion from their present temptations, to renew and maintain repentance for their old sins.

Besides the habit or customary return of such corrupt imaginations, that these unhappy sinners have entailed upon themselves, they have also given hereby such a fatal handle to the temptations of the devil, and furnished
such

such a pleasing habitation for unclean spirits, that lewd and blasphemous thoughts have been continually imposed upon them with ease, by the sport and malice of the tempter; these have given them many grievous days and restless nights, constant fatigue, and combat, and sorrow of heart; nor could they ever free these inward recesses of the brain, these secret chambers of the fancy, from the impure pictures which they themselves have hung up there, till the whole mortal tabernacle has been demolished. Those wicked images have been graven so deep, and lasted so long, that all their pious labours and tears have never been able to blot them out, till the flesh itself has been destroyed in death.

Betimes then, O ye young finners, awake betimes to serious piety, and flee every youthful lust; avoid the persons and the places that would tempt you to sensual or profane practices; turn your eyes away from the very appearances of guilt, and from all defiling representations; let your ears be deaf to all the language of profaneness or immodesty, lest you suffer a fatal inroad to be made upon the avenues of the fancy, and admit such a guilty treasure of mischief and iniquity there, that may lay a foundation for toil and anguish, and much bitterness of soul, in the following and the better years of life.

Question III. *Whether we may be guilty of sin in our dreams, in hours of delirium under a fever, or in seasons of distraction and madness?*

Answer. I join all these three together, because they all agree in this, that the representations made on the brain are so strong and predominant in all of them, that *imagination* is almost equal to *sense*; it imitates sight and hearing, and the appearances and actions of life so nearly, that the soul cannot distinguish them; and sometimes the wild operations of the brain overpower even the present impressions made upon the senses, and fancy prevails above the ear or the eye. Dreaming is but sleeping distraction, as the distraction of a delirious hour is but a waking dream.

Now where the images of fancy are so prevalent, the soul even of a holy man may be so far overpowered, as that reason is quite thrown out of its seat; the understanding is dazzled and deceived by the glaring flashes of imagination; the notions of conscience, the rules of duty, and the sacred motives of religion, are, as it were, confounded and overwhelmed, and lost for a season, under the constant strong impressions of the animal spirits revelling in the recesses of the brain: And where the disorder rises to such a degree as this, the springs of carnal appetite and passion are soon touched and awakened;
and

and being of a kindred nature, are suddenly inflamed; so that a man of piety may be hurried to consent to sinful practices, under any of these waking or sleeping distractions. In such a case the guilt seems to be lessened so far as the reason is drowned in confusion and darkness, and the thought and conscience overpowered and cheated with false impressions. Perhaps at the end of this disorder, when the man awakes into daylight and reason again, he knows nothing of what has passed; or if he recollects the folly, he blushes and mourns over the infirmity of his nature; and while he asks forgiveness of God, he can scarce forgive himself, that he should yield the least consent to criminal inclinations.

Where the confusion of thought does not arise to such an overwhelming degree, but there are some debating of reason, some notions of duty, some workings of conscience, and yet the soul complies at last, there the guilt is increased, and rises higher, in proportion to the exercise of the intellectual faculties. But this crime can never become near to the guilt of the same actions, done in a waking hour, or in a season of health, and soundness of mind and memory.

I have known a man of serious piety take the name of God in vain, and curse under the power of distraction, which he would have abhorred with all his soul, if he had

been in his senses, and not absolutely overpowered by the disordered humours of the flesh.

Yet take this awful *caution* by the way: That where these disorders or diseases of the brain, sleeping or waking, are caused by our own folly or wickedness, by luxury, by unmortified lusts, or by any immoral practices, the case seems to be far worse, and perhaps the guilt of every irregular action is proportionably enhanced and aggravated thereby; as in the wild freaks of a drunkard, who has indulged his vicious appetite, till it has overcome all his better faculties; for there reason itself, and the common judgment of mankind, determine the crimes then committed against the society to be justly punishable: He that kills a man in his drunken fit, must be put to death when he is grown sober. And how far God will impute every thing that is criminal, and whether he will not deal with such a one in rigour, according to the full guilt of the crime, can be determined only by God himself. He sees all the secret motions of the flesh and spirit; he weighs every circumstance in a true balance; he knows perfectly all the rules of strict and impartial justice; and will judge the world with divine equity and wisdom.

Let us watch and pray then, lest we enter into temptation in the healthful and waking hours

hours of life: Let us carefully shun all those practices that have any tendency to discompose the brain, or introduce disease, or disorder into that part of our animal powers; lest if we bring these inconveniencies upon ourselves by our own guilt or negligence, we expose ourselves to more just censure and punishment, for the unhappy effects and attendants of such a disordered imagination.

And there is another reason too why we should take care at all times to employ our thoughts and our time aright; and that is, that we may introduce a better habit into animal nature, and provide better against those seasons wherein either the daily course of nature, or the afflictive providence of God, may seem to give the powers of the flesh an excessive or superior influence over the faculties of the mind. Let us never indulge the corrupt appetites, the unlawful desires, or the sinful passions that work within us: Let us be watchful against every rising enemy, and subdue the vicious propensities of nature by holy diligence in our proper duty, and by earnest addresses to the throne of grace: Let us treasure up in our imagination the sacred histories of the Bible, and fill our memory with the things of religion; that the ideas of better things than riches, honours, and pleasures, may be ever ready to start up and appear to the soul, when it is at leisure from other ne-

cessary business. This might happily furnish out safer and sweeter scenes to entertain fancy at midnight-hours, or when the brain labours under worse disorders by reason of some bodily distemper. The wise man tells us, that a *dream cometh through the multitude of business*, Eccl. v. 3. And by the multitude of thoughts that pass through the mind, and are entertained with delight, in the vigorous and wakeful parts of life, the animal powers of fancy and passion will generally be in some measure influenced and regulated. The best way then to cure covetous, or ambitious, or luxurious dreams, is to fight against the workings of these iniquities when we are awake; for a very pure fountain, even under some casual disturbance, will not send forth its streams so much defiled, and so muddy, as where the spring itself is filthy or corrupt, and under some disturbance too.

Quest. IV. *Whether all persons are equally defiled with original sin?*

Ans^w. We must here distinguish between the *guilt of sin* belonging to the person, and the *power of sin* that is in the nature.

Now whatsoever *guilt* is derived to any person from Adam, by communion with him in his first apostasy, the same is derived to all the posterity; nor is this the thing that is doubted or enquired here.

But

But as to the *power of sin* in the nature, it is evident that there are not the same degrees of sinful propensity, vicious appetite, and passion, in the bodies of all, even from their very birth and infancy. The constitution of animal or fleshly nature in some, is much more fullen or greedy, more wanton or peevish, more slothful, or proud and haughty, than it is in others, according to the various mixture of the blood and humours, and the different ferments that arise thence, whereby the soul is early impressed and governed, and habituated to particular vices betimes.

Though we are all *conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity*, Pſal. li. 5. yet there are some who are emphatically wicked in their very constitutions, who are more remarkably *estranged* to all that is good *from the womb, and go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies*, Pſalm lviii. 3. Whereby the Pſalmist may seem to intimate, that some persons have wickedness more eminently running through their families; they are born and bred utter strangers to God, honesty, and goodness; and they have a sort of craft and knavishness mingled with their temper, that they practise lying as soon as they can speak.

It is evident enough to the observation of every man, that some persons are of a more temperate, more chaste, more modest, more

friendly and kind disposition, even in animal nature; they are more plain-hearted, and of a more honest and sincere make from their very infancy; they have more of the dove and of the lamb in them, than of the fox, the bear, or the lion; and the soul is not led astray to the practice of the contrary vices, either so far, or so early, as those who, perhaps, from their immediate parents, have received flesh and blood more tainted with these iniquities. And if this be called a *different degree of original sin*, I will not stand now to contest the word, nor can I utterly deny the matter.

But still it is abundantly evident also concerning every one of us, who are sons or daughters of Adam, how sinful or how holy soever our immediate parents were, that we bring vicious propensities enough with our flesh and blood into this world, that if we encourage and indulge them, and walk after the flesh, we shall soon be found sufficiently wicked here, and grow meet for a just condemnation hereafter; and this will be the case of the best constitution, unless a mighty change pass upon nature, by the power of renewing and sanctifying grace. *All that is born of the flesh is flesh*, or sinful; and *except a man be born of water and the Spirit*, that is, regenerated by the Spirit of God, which is typified by baptismal water, *he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*.

Question

Question V. *Whether the same sin always carries equal guilt with it in different persons, who have the same advantage or the same degrees of knowledge?*

Answer. It seems to be supposed in the question, that different means or different measures of knowledge make the sinner more or less guilty in the sight of God; and indeed our Saviour himself has determined that point beyond all dispute, Matt. xi. 21, 22. Chorazin and Bethsaida having seen the miracles of Christ, and heard his doctrine, were much more culpable than Tyre and Sidon, whose great ignorance would render their case more tolerable in the day of judgment.

But to answer this question, let it be considered that there are other things besides knowledge that make sins more or less heinous. The same crime committed under a small and single temptation, is much more culpable than when the temptations are many and strong, whether they be within us or without us. Now if a person of a sharp and fretful constitution, or whose natural juices of the flesh are soured by long sickness and pain, should fall into frequent passions of sinful anger, notwithstanding all his labour and watchfulness against it, he is not quite so criminal in the sight of God as another, who has no such peevish and fretful springs of passion in his nature, neither by original constitution, nor by any accidental distemper.

The

The man that perpetually carries about with him the vigorous and active feeds of any sinful appetite or affection, may take ten times more pains in mortification than another does who is of a happier temperature, and yet may fall more frequently into *his own* peculiar iniquities, and be overcome by the *sin that easily besets him*: Nor is his guilt so great as it is in those who are blessed with a better animal nature, but either take no care to guard against those sins, or perhaps excite nature to practise the same iniquities, beyond its own inbred appetite.

And for this reason it is evident, that a person who in different periods of life commits the same sins, may deserve much more blame at one time than another; so wanton practices are more hateful and criminal in old age, and slothfulness and inactivity in duty is a greater fault in the days of youth; because in those different seasons of human life, there is less temptation to those sins arising from the flesh.

So fear, and sudden anger and sorrow, wheresoever they are found excessive in persons of enfeebled constitutions, labouring under sharp pains, or oppressed by nervous maladies, and weak natural spirits, have not quite so much guilt in them as those sins would have in the same persons when they were in a state of vigour and health; for then they had less uneasiness within to join with the provocations

provocations and temptations from without; and besides, they were much more capable of bridling the inferior powers, of countermanding the animal motions and evil ferments: Then they could more easily maintain a wise self-government, they could range their thoughts in better array to resist these sudden attacks of the flesh.

I might add further also, that under these sort of infirmities they are more exposed to sudden surprisef; the hurry of the natural spirits shakes the whole network of the nerves in a moment; they throw all the blood into the face at once; or, by a contrary operation, spread an univerfal chill and tremor over the body, and clothe the countenance in paleness and the image of death.

They flash like gunpowder, they force the sweat through every pore, and convey a ferment of passion through the whole nature at once, so that the soul is sometimes seized into a sudden consent to the sinful motions of the body before it is aware; which dangers are much more easily prevented in a calm and healthful state of life.

But here let me insert a cautionary remark or two, to guard against the abuse of this doctrine, which is designed for the relief of holy, humble, and dejected souls.

1. *Caution.* Many who return frequently to the commission of the same sin, excuse their own slothful and sottish negligence by
throwing

throwing the blame on their constitution; let them take heed, lest it be found that it is their own wilful indulgence of sinful appetite and temptation, and not constitution, hath made the habit of sin so strong within them, and hath formed their very temper into such vice and iniquity, which was by no means born with them in any uncommon degree, but is owing to their own wicked practice: God sees through such vile hypocrisy and disguise as this, and will punish the sinner with a double stroke of vengeance, one for his guilty sensuality, and the other for his hateful dissembling. If I would give an instance of this pretence, I think it is found no where more frequently than among the drunkards, the passionate, and the unclean; and such persons also discover the vanity of their pretences, in that they always excuse their sins, and seldom or never mourn under them.

2. *Caution.* If your iniquity that frequently besets you, arise from any bodily disorder which you have brought on yourself by your own sins, dare not murmur, and charge the providence of God with this your disease or impotence, but maintain a humbling sense of your own guilt, which, perhaps, God hath thus chastised in righteousness: And let younger sinners avoid all those guilty practices that may turn their very nature and better constitution into vice and raging appetite, or into such diseases as may expose them

to the violent and unruly insults of flesh and blood. Let them take heed of indulging vehement desires or aversions, even to common, indifferent, or lawful objects, lest affection get the ascendant, and subject the flesh; and, by that means, the soul also, to a slavish habit of appetite and passion.

3. *Caution.* Let not those persons, whose happier constitution, or uninterrupted health, gives them some advantages in this respect, throw off their daily watchfulness, or neglect prayer, lest a vain self-confidence betray them into foul iniquities: And let them remember too, that their guilt will be the greater.

Nor should those whose appetites and passions are become more unruly, either by the original temperature of their flesh and blood, or by particular distempers, indulge themselves more easily in a sinful compliance, under pretence that their guilt is less; unless they are content to dwell for ever in fire and sorrow, upon this condition, that some of the sorrows of hell be sharper than theirs, and some part of the flame be hotter and fiercer. O rather think that you are called by the providence of God to a stricter watch, to more frequent and fervent prayer, and to a more laborious resistance of the flesh; and the grace of Christ is sufficient to assist the weakest warrior, and make him an overcomer even in the hardest conflict.

But

But this naturally leads me on to the next question.

Question VI. *Whether there be not a very unequal distribution of providence in these various constitutions of mankind? And how can this be reconciled to strict justice, to make the difficulties of the state of trial so much harder in one man than it is in another, by exposing him to much stronger temptations?*

Answer. This difficulty, which dwells on the lips of profane sinners, is easily solved by attending to a few such propositions as these:

1st, This must be laid down as an eternal and an unmoveable truth, that the great God has all possible perfections belonging to his nature, and his whole conduct in providence is ever regulated by those perfections; so that he can no more be unjust, than he can be impotent or ignorant; nor can any part of his conduct be unrighteous, any more than it can be weak or unskilful.

2dly, It is evident to the universal observation of Heathens as well as Christians, that mankind is a fallen and degenerate rank of beings, who have lost their primitive innocence and happiness; and are running on to deeper guilt and misery, with headlong and thoughtless haste: Though it is only the scripture that informs us how this came to pass

pass, which philosophers, by the light of nature, could never find out.

3dly, If the whole race of creatures, which were so degenerate, had been put under the most difficult tests of obedience, in a state of trial, appointed in order to their recovery from ruin, not one of them had any just reason to complain, or murmur against their sovereign Ruler in the methods of his wisdom working toward their recovery.

4thly, If some of these fallen and degenerate beings have therefore some easier circumstances of trial appointed to them, such ought to be very thankful indeed, but others ought by no means to quarrel with their Maker, or treat their fellow-creatures with envy. *Is thine eye evil because he is good?* Matth. xx. 15.

5thly, Perhaps many of those who have less inward temptations in the flesh, are, in the course of providence, exposed to greater outward temptations in the world; and in this case, the state of trial for both of them may be equally difficult; the one is balanced with the other.

6thly, How great soever the difficulties appear which any soul is exposed to by the unhappy circumstances of flesh and blood, to which it is united, there is sufficient relief provided in the covenant of grace; there is sufficient atonement and pardon in the blood of Christ to remove the deepest guilt, and
sufficient

sufficient aids of the blessed Spirit promised in the gospel, to mortify the most violent appetites, and perverse affections of the flesh; and there are many souls now in heaven, who wrestled hard with as vile constitutions of body here on earth as you are vexed with, but have been made conquerors by the power of this gospel.

7thly, Consider also, that the harder the fight is, the brighter shall be the crown, and the most laborious combat shall be attended with the fairest prize. Maintain your conflict with flesh and blood, though the strife may be never so sharp and painful; hold out till you are called up to the world of spirits, and you shall find that your *labour was not in vain*.

Have a care then, O man, of contending with God thy Maker; nor let the earthen vessel say to the Potter, *Why hast thou formed me thus?* If thou givest a loose to thy corruptions because they are strong, thou practisest the same folly as if the keeper should give a loose to a lion, because it is a very wild and large one, and let him run at random because he is full of rage. What dost thou think the event will be, O sinner? When thy native appetites are still grown stronger by indulgence, and become utterly ungovernable, and thou art plunged into unspeakable guilt, and endless misery, what a cutting reflection it will be to thy conscience, that

that, inſtead of watching, praying, and ſtriving againſt thine inbred ſins, thou wert ever quarrelling at the great God thy Maker, that he did not form thy nature juſt according to thy directions: Eſpecially when thou ſhalt ſee others advanced to high feats in glory, and reaping the joys of the Chriſtian conqueſt, who had as many adverſaries to wreſtle with in the days of their fleſh, and each of them as violent and as mighty as thine.

Question VII. If the ſprings of ſin lie ſo much in the fleſh, are not ſome methods of reforming the fleſh proper to be practiſed, in order to facilitate the work of mortification, to cure our ſinful diſtempers, to prevent actual tranſgreſſion, and break the habits of ſin?

Answer. Since the ſeeds and occaſions of ſin lie ſo much in the fleſh and blood, doubtleſs it is our duty to take ſome care that theſe ſeeds of iniquity be ſuppreſſed and killed, as far as poſſible, by all proper methods; ſuch as do not neceſſarily interfere with other commands of God, or plain duties of Chriſtianity. But in all matters of this nature, perſons are in danger of running into extremes.

The Papiſts require a certain *abſtinance from meats*, and *forbid to marry*, without a due attendance to the circumſtances of times, places, and perſons; whereby ſuperſtition is ſupported, and ſinful appetites are often irri-

tated, instead of suppressing them. At other times they wear sackcloth on their flesh, they scourge and whip themselves, they lay their bodies under much painful discipline, and sometimes too under bloody correction, in order to mortify sin. But it was never required of God, that we should break the sixth command in order to keep the seventh; for the advice of Christ about parting with a *right-hand*, or a *right-eye*, Matt. v. 29. is to be taken metaphorically for the mortification of *darling sins*, or, at least, in a comparative sense, that it is better to bear the loss of a limb than to be eternally miserable, if there were no other possible way of escape.

Besides, it is part of their design also in Popery, to make some sort of atonement and satisfaction for past sins by these superstitious severities, which are so far from being acceptable to God in this sense, that they dishonour the blood of Christ, and will be abhorred of the Father.

Some Protestants run to another extreme, and because our religion is spiritual, therefore they neglect many due restraints of the flesh, and think to secure themselves from sin merely by the exercises of the mind, without due guard or care to keep the body under proper discipline, in order to mortify the lusts thereof. They are ready to imagine that this is too legal a way of mortification, that it detracts from the liberty and
privilege

privilege of the Christian state, to keep under the flesh by any such methods of self-government.

But in opposition to these two extremes, the scripture seems plainly to lead us to a *medium*; and the rules which may be drawn from the word of God, may be chiefly comprised under these few Heads.

1st, *Never dare indulge the craving of the flesh in any one sinful appetite or inclination; much less make provision for it, to fulfil the lusts thereof, Rom. xiii. 14.* Here indeed you should be well informed what is and what is not sinful, and not bind the body to extravagant and unreasonable restraints, under a mistaken notion of sin and duty. But when you are once upon just grounds satisfied what is unlawful, then, if *sinful neighbours, or if sinful self entice thee, consent thou not; for every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed, Prov. i. 10. James i. 14.* Compliance with sin is the way to make sin strong: Every such indulgence gives it courage to demand more, and makes the inclinations grow into a confirmed habit. It is the character of the *children of wrath*, that *they fulfil the desires of the flesh, Eph. ii. 3.*

2^{dly}, *Keep out of the way of temptation.* Whatsoever place, company, diversion, or unnecessary business, you have found ready to provoke a corrupt passion, avoid it as

much as possible. *Remove thy way afar off, and come not nigh the door of her house,* Prov. v. 8.

3dly, *Deny the flesh sometimes in its lawful appetites, to teach it subjection,* and let it learn to be governed, by being sometimes restrained, and disappointed in its innocent desires, that it may with more ease be withheld when unlawful objects appear. The holy apostle seems to have this in his eye, when he tells the Corinthians, that he *that striveth for the mastery must be temperate in all things:* And he assures them, that he *keeps his own body under, and brings it into subjection,* 1 Cor. ix. 25, 27. And in the last verse of the eighth chapter, *He will eat no flesh while the world stands, rather than make his brother offend.* Surely then he would use the same self-denial, rather than be in danger of giving himself leave to offend.

4thly, *Keep the body in such temper and circumstances as may render it fittest for the present duty.* If excess of faintness and feeble spirits make it unfit for service, refresh it with the proper comforts of life. If through excess of vigour, and a florid state of the blood, it grow unfit for any duties of religion, or lead the mind astray to dangerous vanities and allurements, it may sometimes be kept under by diligence in labour, by sparing diet, and diminished hours of sleep. *When Jeshurun waxed fat, he kicked,* Deut. xxxii.

xxxii. 15. And the danger of Sodom was plenty and luxury, which the scripture describes by *fulness of bread*, joined with *abundance of idleness*, Exod. xvi. 49.

And it is upon this account that you find *fasting* joined with *prayer*, in the New Testament as well as in the Old; and perhaps the word *watching*, which is coupled therewith, may in some places be supposed to include its literal sense also; for abstinence from full measures of food and sleep may give occasional assistance to the soul in devout exercises; and where experience finds that a full indulgence either of sleep or food unfits the body, or clogs the soul in any duties of religion, there those appetites of the flesh are certainly to be restrained.

I might add, in the last place, *That if any sharp diseases of the body, or disordered humours, awaken the sinful ferments of any passion or appetite, in a more than ordinary manner, seek relief from the physician, to restore the flesh to its best state of service to the soul; that it may be delivered, through the divine blessing, from vexing disquietudes, from sudden surprises of sin, from the feeble flutterings of animal nature, from languour and heaviness, and every other infirmity; and may join chearfully and regularly with thy willing soul, to glorify God, thy Maker and thy Saviour.*

But,

But, after all, *never imagine that these, or any other methods of mortification, will be effectual to suppress and cure one sin, without converting and renewing grace, without the knowledge and faith of Jesus Christ, who is the only Redeemer of mankind, appointed to save us from our sins; the only Physician able to cure our spiritual maladies. It is a deep sense of the universal corruption of nature, together with a trusting our whole selves into the hands of Christ, to be sanctified and saved, is the only effectual and sure way to holiness. It is faith must purify the heart, Acts xv. 9. It is by the influences of the great and precious promises of the gospel, that we must be made partakers of a divine nature, and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust, 2 Pet. i. 4. All our labours, short of regeneration, and an entire change of the whole soul, by the mighty work of the Spirit of Christ, are but like nipping the blossoms of a poisonous tree, like cutting off the twigs, or lopping the branches, while the fatal stock stands firm still, and the root maintains its life and full vigour. Thus it will be ever springing with new shoots, and bring forth fruits of guilty and mortal favour. But converting grace is a blow at the root; it kills the sinful principle, or, at least, gives it a deadly wound. Seek earnestly therefore the Spirit of Christ,*

to

to renew your whole natures: *Walk under the influences of this blessed Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, Gal. v. 16, 24.* For it is only *they that are Christ's, who have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts;* and *if, by the assistances of this Spirit, you mortify the deeds of the body, you shall have a life here on earth, made up of the peace and beauty of holiness, and you shall die out of this world, into a diviner life of glory. Amen.*

F I N I S.



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