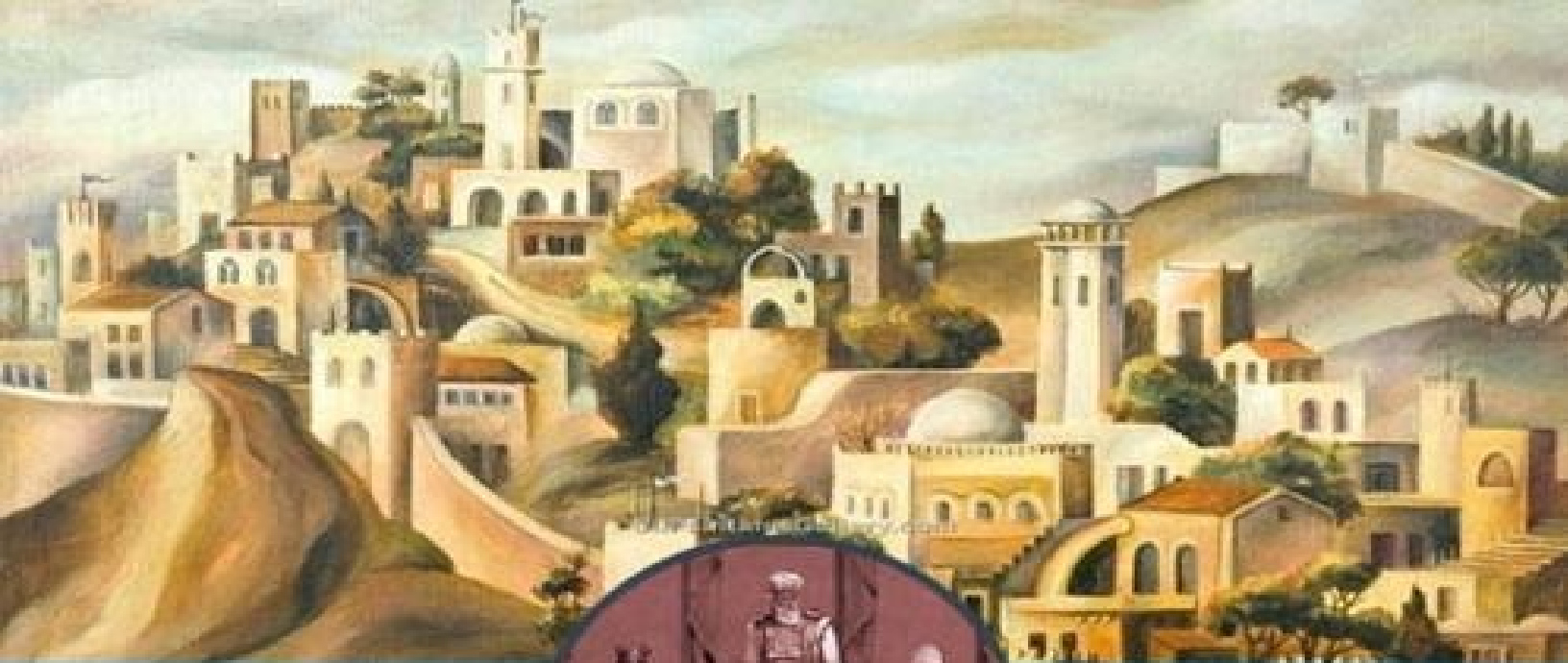
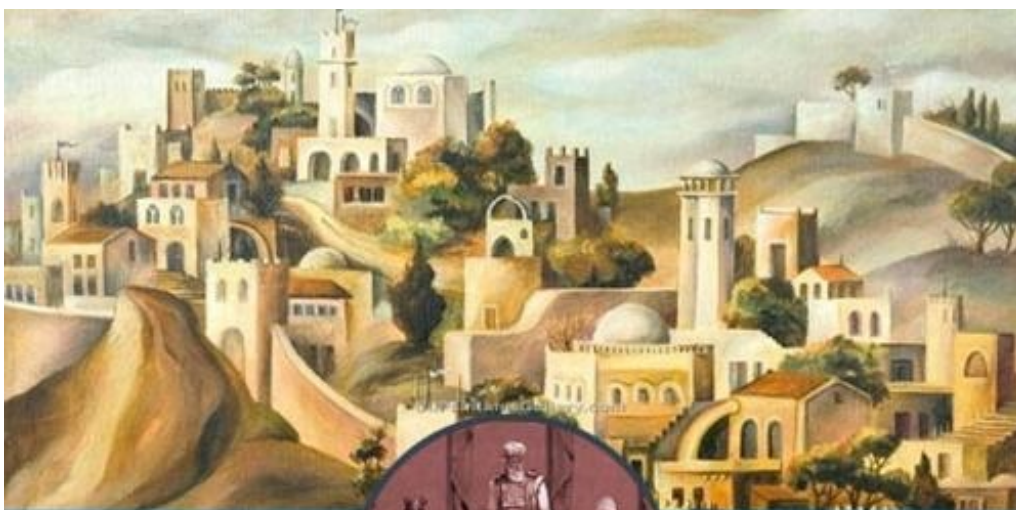




The Offices of Christ

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THE OFFICES OF CHRIST IN GENERAL

ZECH. 6:13.—Even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a Priest upon his throne.

HAVING shewn that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Redeemer of elect sinners, and that it was necessary he should be God and man in one person, to qualify him for his Mediatory undertaking, I come now to speak of the offices which Christ executes as our Redeemer, from the text now read.

In the 11th verse of this chapter, there is a typical action crowning Joshua the high priest with two crowns, which is applied and explained in the following verses as representing Christ in his offices, who has on his head many crowns. In the 12th verse, there is a prophecy of the incarnation of Christ, under the metaphor of a branch, as sprung from the family of David, and making but a mean appearance in the world, 'as a root out of a

dry ground.' In the verse where our text lies, we have the offices which he was to execute as our Redeemer; which are three.

1. The office of a Prophet; He shall build the temple of the Lord; that is, his own church, whereof the temple was a type, by the word of the gospel, which it is his work to promulgate as a Prophet. For the church is 'built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone,' and the revealer of those truths which the prophets and apostles taught.

2. The office of a Priest; namely to expiate the sins of his people to purchase peace for them, and to manage their cause with God.

3. That of a King; for he has a throne, which denotes his kingly office. He is a Priest upon his throne, denoting the reward of his sufferings, and the high dignity he is advanced to in consequence of his humiliation and satisfactory sufferings. And he is represented as sitting on his throne, not a King in name only, or an inactive monarch, but exercising acts of jurisdiction and government. In him all the glory of these offices is to meet: and these offices he shall hold and exercise in spite of all opposition: He shall sit and rule upon his throne.

The text affords foundation for the following doctrine, viz.

DOCT. 'Christ, as our Redeemer, executeth the offices of a Prophet, of a Priest, and of a King, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. The verity of these offices in Christ.

II. The necessity of his exercising them as our Redeemer.

III. When he did exercise these offices.

IV. Lastly, Deduce some inferences.

1. I am to shew the verity or reality of these offices in Christ. I say then, that Christ as our Redeemer is actually invested with these offices; he is

truly a Prophet, a Priest, and a King; and also that he executes them, that is, performs the functions of, or what belongs to these offices. This clearly appears,

1. From plain scripture testimony, (1.) To his having or being possessed of these offices.—He is a Prophet, that Prophet foretold by Moses, who was to be heard in all things that he should say; and of whom it is said, 'That every soul that would not hear him, should be destroyed from among the people, Acts 3:22, 23 which passage is applied to Jesus Christ by the apostle Peter, and can agree to none but him, who teacheth as never man taught, even with authority and power.—He is a Priest. So he is expressly called, Heb. 5:6. 'Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec;' and in several other places of that epistle, where the reality, nature, and end of his priesthood are largely described.—He is a King: Psal. 2:6. 'Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.' Psal. 110:2. 'Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.' He has all the ensigns of royal authority. The ceremony of inauguration or anointing to his office, Psal. 2:6. Heb. 'I have anointed my King upon my holy hill of Zion;' a crown, Psal. 21:3; a sword, Psal. 45:3; a sceptre, Psal. 65:6; subjects, Luke 1:33. John 1:49. (2.) The scriptures bear witness to his executing these offices. Hence he says himself, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life,' John 14:6. He is the way to life and happiness by his death; the truth in his word, the sum and substance of all revealed truth; and the life in his Spirit, quickening and preserving his people by his power. He 'of God is made unto his people wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption:' wisdom as a Prophet, righteousness as a Priest, and sanctification and redemption as a King.

2. We learn this also from his name Christ, or Messiah, which signifies the anointed One, I told you in a former discourse, that three sorts of persons used to be anointed under the law, viz. Prophets, 1 Kings 19:16; priests, as Aaron, Exod. 29:7; and kings, as David and others. But all these offices meet in Christ, who was anointed for the execution of them. Hence he says himself, Isa. 61:1. 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.' He is

anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek, as a Prophet; to bind up the broken-hearted, as a Priest; and to proclaim liberty, as a King. He was not anointed with material oil, as the prophets, priests, and kings, under the Old Testament dispensation were, but with the oil of the Spirit; 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me (says he), because the Lord hath anointed me.' And God is said to have 'anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows,' Psal. 45:7. Now, this unction signified, (1.) His being set apart to the Mediatory work, and to these offices: the Father 'sanctified him, and sent him into the world,' John 10:36. (2.) His being fully furnished with gifts and qualifications suitable to these offices, in respect of his human nature, to which the Spirit was given, not by measure, Isa. 11:1, 2. &c. but in fulness, not of sufficiency only, but abundance, not the fulness of a vessel, but of a fountain, in order to communicate liberally unto his people, John 1:16. He was solemnly inaugurated to these offices at his baptism, Mat. 3:17 at his transfiguration, Mat. 17:5 and at his exaltation, Acts 2:36. And he was as solemnly called to these offices, Heb. 5:4, 5. 'No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron': so also, Christ glorified not himself, to be made an High Priest; but he that said unto him, 'Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee'.

II. Let us next consider the necessity of his exercising these offices. Christ's incarnation and taking on him the work of our redemption was entirely voluntary, without the least shadow of co-action and compulsion; but seeing he was pleased out of his great kindness to us, to become our Redeemer, it was necessary for our salvation that he should execute all these three offices. This will be clear, if we,

1. Consider our misery by sin, ignorance, guilt, and bondage. We were ignorant of the way of returning to God again; and therefore Christ as our Prophet must teach us. We durst not look him in the face, being covered with guilt? and therefore Christ as a Priest must make atonement, and remove our guilt. We were in bondage to sin and Satan, and could not return to God, nor recover ourselves out of our thralldom; therefore Christ as a King delivers us, brings us back again, leading captivity captive. As a Prophet he gives light to the blind, as a Priest he brings merit, and as a King power.

2. Consider the salvation which the elect were to be made partakers of. It behoved to be revealed unto them, seeing of themselves they could never discover it, being quite blind and ignorant; and therefore our Redeemer became a Prophet to reveal the things that concern our salvation unto us, and instruct us therein. It behoved to be purchased for sinners, who, being weak and unfit for any spiritual work, could never purchase it for themselves: therefore he became a Priest to purchase life and eternal redemption for us. It behoved to be applied by the power of his Spirit; for as sinners could not purchase salvation, far less could they apply it to themselves: therefore Christ became a King. The slaves could never have raised their ransom, nor known it after it was paid, far less before; and they were unwilling to come out of their bondage. And therefore it behoved our Redeemer to be invested with these three offices.

3. Consider Christ as Mediator of the covenant, who behoved to deal with both parties, in order to bring them together. God was offended with our sin and guilt; and therefore for us he behoved to be a Priest, to satisfy law and justice, and intercede for our pardon. We knew not what was in agitation between the Father and the Son; and therefore he behoved to be a revealer of that grace, and merciful contrivance. We were unwilling to deal with God; therefore he behoved, as a King, to bring us to submit and yield to his government. The benefits of the covenant he behoved to purchase, reveal, and administer.

4. Consider the work of conversion. The soul must be enlightened, by the conviction of the Prophet, to see its misery, and the suitableness of the remedy: upon the sight of its misery, the soul would despair, were not the blood of the Priest to sprinkle the conscience; and the will would never yield, if it felt not the power of his conquering sword.

5. Consider our daily necessities. Are we not every day in the dark about something? What should become of us, if we had not the great Prophet to go to for instruction and direction? We are every day contracting new guilt: what would be our case, if there were not a lasting merit and an abiding Advocate? Are we not always needing protection against our enemies? how then should we break through the armies of hell, if our King were not on our head, to subdue them under us?

6. Lastly, Consider the promises, which are the stay and staff of the Christian's life, without which they could never bear up. Christ's offices are the source and spring of all these. How precious are the promises of illumination, guidance, direction, &c. to the blind and those who know not the way? These flow from Christ's prophetic office. 'Behold, (says Jehovah), I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people,' Isa. 55:4. How precious are promises of peace, pardon, and reconciliation, to those who are disquieted with fears, with guilt and sin? These flow from his Priestly office. And the promises of protection and deliverance to captives flow from his Kingly office. All the promises are the purchase of the blood of Christ; and they are all yea and amen in him, and flow from and through him.

III. I come now to shew, when Christ did execute these offices. As he was the Redeemer of the church in all ages, so did he execute these offices in all ages of the church. In the Old Testament he was the great Prophet of the church; for it is said, John 1:18. 'No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' He brought the glad tidings of salvation unto sinners in all the discoveries thereof from the first gospel-promise until his manifestation in the flesh. And he not only reveals the things concerning salvation unto men, but teaches them, and gives men an understanding to apprehend and know them. He was a Prophet unto the church in the wilderness: Hence it is said, Exod. 23:20. 'Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice.' And we read, that by the Spirit he went and preached unto the spirits in prison,' 1 Pet. 3:19 that is, unto the sinners in the old world, by the ministry of Noah, who, not repenting, were then, at the time the apostle wrote, in the prison of hell. He was also their Priest, interceding, on the ground of his future sufferings, for his people. Of this we have a remarkable instance, Zech. 1:12. 'O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?' And he was their King, the Captain of the Lord's host, who led and conducted them, delivered them from the Egyptian bondage, guided them through the howling wilderness, placed them in Canaan, instituted their whole religious worship and service, &c.

But more especially Christ executed these offices after his incarnation, and that in his twofold estate of humiliation and exaltation. These are his two estates, of which the apostle speaks, Phil. 2:8, 9. 'Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.'

He was a prophet while on earth, and still is revealing by his Word and Spirit the will of God for the salvation of his people. The whole doctrine of the Bible was taught by him; and it is by him that all saving knowledge is communicated to this day, and will be to the end of time.

He was a Priest in his state of humiliation, as well as he is in his state of exaltation. He offered his sacrifice on the earth, and therefore was a Priest there. Hence saith the apostle, Eph. 5:2. 'Christ—hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.' Nor did he ascend into heaven, till by his sacrifice he had 'purged away our sins,' Heb. 1:3. And he continues an interceding Priest for ever, Heb. 7:25.

He was also a King in his state of humiliation. He was born a King, Matth. 2:2 went into Jerusalem as a King, in accomplishment of an ancient prophecy concerning him, Matth. 21:5 owned himself to be a King before Pilate, Matth. 27:11. It was the Lord of glory that was crucified, 1 Cor. 2:8. And he is now exalted to his throne, and is styled, 'King of kings, and Lord of lords,' and will reign till all his enemies be made his footstool, and all his subjects be brought home to glory.

Here it may be observed, that these three offices, which Christ executes, are not to be divided, especially when they are executed in a way that is effectual for the salvation of the subjects thereof. He may indeed objectively reveal the will of God, and give laws to his church, as a Prophet, without giving them the unction whereby those who are savingly taught of God know all things necessary to salvation: and he may execute his regal office, as a Judge, in inflicting heavy judgments and calamities on his enemies, without subduing them to that obedience and subjection to him which is the privilege of real believers. Yet it is a certain truth, that wherever he executes one of these offices in a saying way, he executes

them all. In this respect, though the offices are distinct, yet they are not divided. For whosoever is taught by him as a Prophet, so as to be made wise unto salvation, is redeemed unto God by his blood as a Priest, and is subdued by his power as a King, and made a willing subject to him: and all whose sins are expiated by him as a Priest, shall, in his own time, be savingly taught by him as a Prophet, and made his willing subjects as a King, in the day of his power.

A few inferences shall shut up this subject.

1. How great and how glorious is our Lord Jesus Christ, who was meet to bear all these offices at once, and exercise them at once, so as one does not mar or clash with another! He is glorious indeed in whom all the glory scattered amongst the typical persons is perfectly concentrated. If it was an honour to Melchizedec, to be both a priest and a king, and David to be both a king and a prophet; how much more glorious is it for our divine Mediator to be a Prophet, a Priest, and a King, really possessed of these offices, and exercising them in their full extent, in a more efficacious manner than any person that was ever invested with any of them on earth!

2. Let this commend Christ unto you as a full and a suitable Saviour. There is no case a poor sinner can be in, but he will find the remedy of it in these offices of Christ. Art thou, O sinner, under spiritual darkness and ignorance? There is knowledge and instruction to be had from him. He is the light of the world and can give thee an understanding to know him that is true, he can give thee the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Art thou under guilt and condemnation, laden with sin that is like to sink thee to hell? There is righteousness in him as a Priest to remove thy guilt. He is the atonement and propitiation for sin. He saves from sin and wrath. Art thou a slave to sin and Satan? He is a King, who came to destroy the works of the devil: he can break the dominion of sin in thee, knock off thy fetters, and subdue all thy spiritual enemies.

3. Ye cannot take Christ, as a Redeemer, if ye take him not in all his offices. He offers himself to sinners no other way. And what God has joined together let no man put asunder. Many pretend to take Christ as a

Saviour to save them from hell and wrath, who do not hearken to him as a Prophet to teach them the saving knowledge of God, nor submit to his laws and commandments. How many call Christ their Lord, and yet do not the things that he saith? O the folly of the world, that reject Christ's teaching, saying, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways! O the stupidity of those who despise Christ as a Priest, and think to recommend themselves to the divine favour by their own works of righteousness, which they substitute in the room of his righteousness! O the madness of those who condemn Christ as a King, refusing to submit to his royal authority, and who spurn at his laws and government! And how foolish are the princes of the earth that will not suffer Christ to reign freely in their dominions, but encroach on his authority, and make laws opposite to and inconsistent with his!

4. Do ye receive Christ in all his offices, giving up yourselves to be taught by him as a Prophet, in all things relating to your salvation, renouncing your own knowledge and wisdom; to be justified by his righteousness, and washed in his blood, renouncing all your own righteousness, as filthy rags, saying, in the Lord alone have I righteousness, and counting all things but loss and dung, that ye may win Christ, and be found in him, not having your own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith;' and to be guided and conducted, ruled and governed by him as your Sovereign Lord and King, yielding a hearty and cheerful obedience to all his laws and commandments, and saying, 'Other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.'

5. Employ this mighty Redeemer in all the offices wherewith he is invested, and which as Mediator he exercises for the benefit of the ruined race of mankind. Ye have absolute need of him in all these offices. Ye are witless and foolish, and stand in need of his wisdom to guide and direct you; and ye are ignorant both of yourselves and of God, and so require saving knowledge and instruction. Ye are guilty and condemned sinners, nay, daily offenders, and so stand in need of pardon, nay, of continual pardons. Ye are weak, and have no strength to combat your spiritual adversaries, and so require the exertion of his mighty power as King of

kings to cause you stand against your adversaries. If you knew yourselves, and were exercised to godliness, you would see the absolute necessity of all Christ's offices for your salvation, and would every day bless God for such a complete and all-sufficient Redeemer. O make use of him daily in all his glorious offices, and honour him by putting employment in his hand, as your Prophet, Priest, and King.

OF CHRIST'S PROPHETICAL OFFICE

ACTS 3:22.—A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren like unto me: him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

HAVING shewn that the Lord Jesus Christ, as our Redeemer, is invested with, and actually executes the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King, I come now to speak of these offices distinctly; and shall begin with his prophetical office, which is plainly asserted in the words now read.

Here the apostle Peter shews the Jews, Moses pointing to Christ as the great Prophet of the church. Moses had told the Israelites in the wilderness, Deut. 18:15. 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.' Peter tells the Jews, that this eminent Prophet was now come, and exhorts them to submit unto his instructions. In the words we have,

1. A description of Christ as to his prophetical office, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you. Where

1st, Christ is described by his title, a Prophet, and that the Prince of all the Prophets, or the 'great,' or 'chief Shepherd,' as he is styled by the apostles. It belongs to a prophet, by virtue of his office, to expound the law, declare the will of God, and foretel things which are to come. All these meet in Christ our great Prophet in a singular and eminent manner.

2dly, He is here described by his type; 'a Prophet like unto me,' says Moses; who therein typified and prefigured Christ. But you may say, is it not said of Moses, Deut. 34:10. 'There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.' I answer, It is true indeed of a mere man there never arose so great a prophet in Israel as Moses was, either in respect of his familiarity with God, or of the miracles which he wrought by the efficacy of the divine power. Moses, however, was but a servant, and Christ a Son: Moses was but a star to this Sun, and derived all his light and knowledge from him. All the prophets under the Old Testament, however eminent were but Stars, and borrowed all their light from the Sun of righteousness. Nevertheless there were several things wherein Christ was like to Moses; such as, Moses and Christ were both persecuted in their infancy, Moses was a deliverer from the temporal, but Christ from the spiritual Egypt, of which the former was a figure. But more particularly, Christ was like to Moses,

(1.) In this great intimacy and familiarity with God. It is said, Exod. 33:11 that 'the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.' He spake with Moses freely, familiarly, and immediately; not by an angel, in a dream or vision, as he did to other prophets. Now Christ was like Moses in this respect, and far excelled him in it; for he was intimate with God from all eternity, Prov. 8:30; he was 'with God,' John 1:1 and lay in his bosom, knowing all his counsels and purposes.

(2.) Christ was like to Moses in the excellency of his ministration, and his great faithfulness in the discharge of it. It is said, Heb. 3:2. 'He was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.' As the office of Moses extended to the whole house of God under the law, and to all the service of it; so did Christ's reach to the whole church of God, and to all the service of it under the gospel. As Moses was appointed of God to give out what he delivered; so was Christ appointed by his Father to institute what he did institute, and abrogate what he did abrogate. As Moses was faithful to him that appointed him in all the matters of God's house, keeping back nothing that he was commanded to reveal; so was Christ faithful to the Father, who did appoint him in like manner; yea, Christ far excelled Moses, as the apostle shews, Heb. 3:3, 4. 'For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, in as much

as he who hath builded the house, hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.'

(3.) Moses was a prophet that mediated between God and the people. He carried God's mind to them, and returned their mind to God, because they were not able to hear the voice of God immediately themselves, Deut. 18:16, 17. So Christ is a Mediator between God and man; he deals with God for man, and with man for God.

(4.) As Moses confirmed his doctrine by many miracles which he wrought in the presence of the people to their full conviction; so our great Prophet is like unto Moses in this also: for he wrought many mighty miracles in the view and face of the world, which could not be denied, and thereby confirmed the doctrine which he preached, and verified the divinity of his person and mission.

3dly, Christ is here described by his stock and lineage from which he sprung according to the flesh, 'A Prophet shall the Lord raise up of your brethren; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came,' says the apostle, Rom. 9:5. He was an Israelite: and it is evident that he sprang from the tribe of Judah, Heb. 7:14. He put great honour and dignity upon that people and nation by his nativity and descent from them.

2. There is a strict injunction given of obedience to this Prophet: 'Him shall ye hear in all things.' By hearing, in this place, we are to understand obedience: and this obedience is required to be given to this Prophet only, universally, and under great penalties. (1.) It is required to be given to him only; for so him in the text must be understood as exclusive of all others. It is true, we are commanded to obey the voice of his messengers and ministers, Heb. 13:17 but still it is Christ speaking by them to whom we are to pay our obedience. 'He that heareth you (says he), heareth me.' We are to obey them 'in the Lord,' i. e. commanding and forbidding in Christ's name and authority. (2.) This obedience must be given to him universally: 'Him shall ye hear in all things.' Whatever he enjoins must presently be complied with; his commands are to be obeyed, not disputed. It is true, a judgment of discretion is allowed to Christians, to judge whether it be the will of God or not. We must 'prove what is the

holy, good, and acceptable will of the Lord,' Rom. 12:2. And whenever his will is understood and known, we have no liberty to chuse, but must conform ourselves to it, be the duty commanded ever so difficult, or the sin forbidden ever so pleasing and tempting. (3.) This obedience is required under a very severe penalty, even no less than being cut off and destroyed from among the people, and of God's requiring it at our hands, Deut. 18:19. Acts 3:22. 'I will require it of him;' i. e. revenge myself in the destruction of the disobedient. This obligation laid on men to obey the great Prophet, is not a prediction, more than the commands, 'Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery,' &c.

The doctrine natively arising from the text is,

DOCT. 'Christ is a Prophet, and, as the Redeemer of his people, executes that office, in revealing to them, by his word and Spirit, the will of God for their salvation.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What is implied in Christ's revealing the will of God for our salvation.

II. What is that will of God that Christ reveals.

III. How he reveals this will of God.

IV. For what ends he reveals the will of God, and the necessity of this revelation in order to our salvation.

V. Lastly, Make some improvement.

1. I am to shew what is implied in Christ's revealing the will of God for our salvation, wherein Christ's prophetic work lies. It implies,

1. That as it is God's determined will and purpose that some of mankind shall be saved, so he has laid down a certain way and method for their salvation, out of which none can be saved, and in which all that take it shall be saved.

2. That the discovery of this method of salvation was a secret of God that

man could never have found out, John 1:8. It was a counsel in the breast of God, which, for man or angel, might for ever have lain hid.

3. That our Lord Jesus was intimately acquainted with this will of God, John 1:18. He was 'in the bosom of the Father.' He was privy to his eternal counsels, as being the eternal Son of God. And therefore he needed not be carried to heaven, to hear and learn from God what he was to teach ere he began to preach to the world, being 'God manifested in the flesh,' 1 Tim. 3:16. Neither did he ascend unto heaven oftener than once, and that only after he had suffered, Heb. 9:12.

4. That unto Jesus Christ we owe the discovery and revelation of the divine will. He is the fountain of all that light which points out the way to salvation, Isa. 55:4. 'I have given him, (says the Lord), for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.' He is that true pillar of cloud that guides to the heavenly Canaan; and no beams of saving light shine on the world but from him, John 3:13 and in the face of Jesus, 2 Cor. 4:6.

II. I proceed to shew what is that will of God that Christ as a Prophet reveals. It is the will of God for the salvation of sinners, and that the whole will of God in all things concerning their edification and salvation. It is 'the word of his grace which is able to build them up,' Acts 20:32. It is 'written, that ye might believe,—and that believing ye might have life.'

This may be reduced to two heads.

1. Faith. Man was broken off from God and his favour and fellowship. 'It was the will of God, that man should come and be reunited to him in the way of believing in a slain Redeemer. This Christ has revealed in the gospel. Therein he has laid open the mystery of reconciliation, as laid down betwixt the Father and him from eternity, in all the parts thereof, and this by his word and Spirit to teach his own children.

2. Obedience. Man, as he could not, so he knew not how to serve acceptably. Christ has also fully discovered that point. And therefore we find him at his prophetic work, expounding the law, and vindicating it from the false glosses of the Pharisees, Matth. 5:6, 7 and every where not

only shewing men what to do, but how to do it.

More particularly, as the will of God denotes all that God would have us to know, believe, and do, in order to our salvation; and as there are some things to be known as the foundation of our faith, some things to be believed, and some things to be done in point of duty, as the fruits and effects of true saving faith; so these particulars being the objects of Christ's teaching, I shall mention a few of them very briefly.

1. Christ makes known to us our original state, that holy and happy condition in which man was made; of which I gave you a specimen in the discourse concerning the creation of man. Man was then a holy and happy creature, the peculiar favourite of heaven, and endued with choicer prerogatives than all the creatures in this lower world. It is necessary for us to know this, that we may not accuse God of that sin and disorder which now prevails in our constitution, and renders us objects of the divine abhorrence; and may be unwearied till we regain our forfeited felicity. This is a matter of pure revelation, and is accordingly taught us in the inspired volume.

2. Christ reveals to us our misery and wretchedness by the fall. This I also endeavoured to open up to you in the course of this work. Man, by sin, lost communion with God, fell under his wrath and curse, and is liable to temporal and eternal miseries. This miserable state, though also a matter of revelation, is well known to all the descendants of Adam, so that they feel it in their sad experience, and they have no need to be taught it. But Christ teaches his people this doctrine in a manner that the rest of the world are strangers to. And therefore,

3. Christ reveals to us our woful impotency and inability to help ourselves. This is the fatal consequence of the fall, and has been partly mentioned in the foregoing part of this work. 'O Israel, (says the Lord), thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help,' Hos. 13:9 which says, that though our ruin is of us, our help is not in us. Hence men in their natural state are said to be without strength, incapable to deliver themselves from the wretched state into which they are plunged by sin. Man is so deeply sunk in the horrible pit, that it passes the skill and ability of men or angels to pull him out. He cannot atone offended justice,

or expiate his sin. This deplorable state of man is revealed in scripture, and savingly only to the elect, by the Saviour of sinners.

4. Christ reveals as a Prophet, that there is a way found out, and a method laid down in the adorable depths of divine wisdom, whereby poor sinners may be delivered from sin and wrath, and obtain eternal salvation. For this discovery we are indebted to divine revelation. Of this I have spoken under the covenant of grace. And Christ, as a Prophet, teaches this article to his people so efficaciously, that they acquiesce in this method of salvation.

5. He reveals to us that he is a full and sufficient Saviour, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, Heb. 7:25. So that his own people cordially embrace him as their only Saviour, and accept him as their sole Redeemer, looking for expiation of guilt, pardon of sin, and peace with God, only from and through him.

6. He teaches, that we must have union with him through faith, or else we can have no benefit by his blood, 1 John 5:12. 'He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life:' that is, he that is united to Christ is spiritually alive, and shall not come into condemnation; but he that is not united to him is still under the curse, and the wrath of God abideth on him. It is by being in Christ, united to him, that we escape condemnation, Rom. 8:1.

7. Christ teaches us, that we must believe in, and receive him as our only Saviour and Redeemer, resting upon him alone for life and salvation. Hence it is said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

8. Another part of the will of God that Christ reveals to us is our sanctification; and we are told, that 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Holiness of heart and life is absolutely to qualify men for the enjoyment of God in heaven, as no unclean thing can enter the celestial abode.

III. I come now to shew how Christ reveals this will of God for salvation, namely, by his word and Spirit, jointly or together; for both are absolutely

necessary for attaining that end.

First, Christ reveals this by his word. This is the external revelation of it, without the knowledge of which no man can be saved. The personal Word of God teaches us by his word written or preached, or extraordinarily revealed. So there are three ways of Christ's teaching by his word.

1. The word extraordinarily revealed, as appears from Heb. 1:1 and Gen. 3:15 which method having long ago ceased, we need not enlarge upon it.

2. By the word preached; which has been managed two ways, wherein the kindness of the Divine Teacher appears,

- (1.) By his own personal preaching, Heb. 1:1 in the days of his flesh, when he went about the work of preaching the gospel to the Jews, for which cause he is called 'the minister of the circumcision,' Rom. 15:8 putting a glory on the ministerial calling, by himself performing that office. He spake as never man spake. An heavenly authority and majesty appeared in his preaching, which attracted the attention of his hearers, and forced them to acknowledge that he was more than a human being.

- (2.) By his ambassadors in his name. So he exercised his prophetic office.

- [1.] Before his incarnation, under the Old Testament, 1 Pet. 3:19 instructing his church sometimes by extraordinary teachers, the prophets; sometimes by ordinary teachers, or both. And this he did both before and after the word was written: for although before the scripture the church was supplied by extraordinary revelation, yet all were not so taught, but many were trained up by the external teaching of the patriarchs; as appears from Abraham's practice, Gen. 18:17, 19.

- [2.] After his incarnation, by the apostles, who are infallibly guided, and to this day by ordinary ministers, by whom Christ still exercises his prophetic office, Eph. 4:11 and so he promised to be with them, Mat. 28 ult. In this respect they have that awful hedge set about them, 'He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.' On this ground he obligeth people to repair to them for clearing, from the

word, the matters of salvation, sin, and duty to them, Mal. 2:7. 'They should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.'

3. By the word written, John 20:31. 'These things are written, that ye might believe,' &c. Thereby it is that the prophets and apostles, and all the inspired writers, being dead, yet speak to us, and Christ by them, to shew us the will of God for our salvation. Thus was the church taught from the days of Moses, and in this manner it is taught to this day. We need not say, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' or 'who shall descend into the depths?' that is, for the revelation of the method of salvation. The word is nigh to us, it is among our hands. To that, Christ sends us to know his mind, Isa. 8:20. 'To the law and to the testimony; yet not to jostle out men's teaching from it, Eph. 4:11, 12.

Yet the word itself is not sufficient to teach us the will of God for our salvation. Not the word preached; for even most of those who heard him that spake as never man spake, were not bettered by his preaching; as appears from John 12:37, 38. 'But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, 'Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?' Nor yet the word written, for the same reason; nor that extraordinarily revealed, as in the case of Balaam. See 1 Cor. 2:14. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' There is a darkness over the minds of men which nothing but omnipotency can remove. Therefore,

Secondly, Christ teaches his elect, who are taught to salvation by his Spirit, who joins internal illumination to external revelation. 'He opened the understandings' of the two disciples who were going to Emmaus, 'that they might understand the scriptures,' Luke 24:45. Thus all the elect are taught of God, and so come to Christ; and thus have they always been taught. Ye must not, however, understand these as two different ways of Christ's teaching to salvation, in those that are capable of both; for the word is that by which the Spirit teacheth still. These God has joined, Isa. 59:21. 'As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, My Spirit

that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.' John 16:13, 14. 'When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.' Thus the teaching of the elect is begun, and thus it continues to the end.

Indeed the word hath a mighty power and efficacy upon the hearts of men. It enlightens their mind, awakens their consciences, convinces of sin, and can effectually convert and change them. But this is only when it is managed by the Spirit's hand. All its power and efficacy is from him. The virtue of the word is not from itself: it doth not work in a physical way, as natural agents do, for then the effect would naturally follow, unless it were miraculously hindered. But this spiritual efficacy is in the word, as the healing virtue was in the pool of Bethesda, of which it is said, John 5:4. 'An angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.' This efficacious power is not naturally inherent in the word at all times but only communicated to it at some special seasons. Many times the word is purely and plainly preached, but no gracious effect follows. It proves but like the beating of the air, which makes no impression upon it: none are awakened, convinced, or converted by it. Neither is the power of the word communicated to it by the instrument that manageth it: for saith the apostle, 1 Cor. 3:7. Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.' Ministers are nothing, they have no power or strength of their own sufficient for such a purpose as this is. The apostle doth not mean here, that they are useless instruments, and altogether unnecessary, but that they are insufficient of themselves, to produce such mighty effects. It worketh not as it is the word of man, but as it is the word of God. Ministers may say of the ordinary, as Peter said of the extraordinary effects of the Spirit, Acts 3:12. 'Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk!' All the power and efficacy of the word is derived from the Spirit of the Lord. It is said, 1

Thess. 2:13. 'When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.' When the word of God is set home by the Spirit, then it is mighty to enlighten the minds, convince the consciences, and humble and break the hearts of sinners. Then it proves as a hammer to break the rock in pieces. And it is said, John 16:8. 'When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.' The word made use of there signifies conviction by such clear demonstration as compelleth assent. It not only convinceth men in general that they are sinners, but it convinceth them particularly of their own sins, and of all the heinous aggravations of them. It sets sin before the eye of conscience in all its aggravating circumstances and fearful consequences, as committed against the holy and righteous law of God, clear light, regrets and checks of conscience, manifold mercies and favours, God's long suffering, Christ's precious blood, many warnings of judgments, the reward and wages whereof, by the verdict of a man's own conscience, is death, even eternal death and damnation.

It may not be improper here to touch at the excellency of Christ's teaching, and shew you that it far transcends the teaching of all others.

1. He teacheth plainly and perspicuously. When he was upon earth, and preached the gospel unto men, he taught them by parables and similitudes, he clothed sublime and spiritual mysteries with earthly metaphors, and thereby adapted them to the low and dull capacities of men, and spake so familiarly about them, as if he had been speaking earthly things. And, according to his own example, he would have his ministers to preach, 'using great plainness of speech,' as the apostle Paul tells us he did, 2 Cor. 3:12 and 'by manifestation of the truth, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God,' 2 Cor. 4:2. Yet he does not allow them to be rude and careless in their expressions, pouring out rude, indigested, mean, sordid, and methodical words, nauseous and ungrateful to the ears of men. No; a holy, serious, and grave expression suits the lips of Christ's ambassadors. And what man ever spake more weightily, logically, and persuasively, than the apostle Paul, by whose pen Christ hath admonished us to beware of vain ostentation, and swelling words of vanity; but he would have us stoop to

the understanding of the meanest, and not to give the people a comment darker than the text. He would have us rather to prick their consciences than tickle their fancies, and break their hearts rather than please their ears. Christ was a very plain preacher, and he not only opened truths to the understanding, but opened the understanding also to perceive them. He takes away the vail from the heart, and causes a heavenly light to shine into the soul, and darts a clear beam from heaven into the mind. Christ's teachings are fully satisfying. The soul doubts no more, staggers or hesitates no more; but fully acquiesces in what Christ teaches. It is so well satisfied therewith, that it can venture all upon the truth of what it hath learned from him.' You may see what is said with respect to this, Prov. 8:8, 9. 'All the words of my mouth are in righteousness, there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.'

2. Christ teaches fully. He gives us a full and clear revelation of the will of God with respect to all things which concern our happiness, either in this life or in that which is to come. That is spoken of Christ which we have, Psal. 40:9, 10. 'I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving kindness, and thy truth from the great congregation.' He hath given us a perfect rule of faith and obedience, in nothing defective or superfluous, but comprehending the whole duty of man. The scriptures contain the counsels of God, which he hath graciously sent to redress the miseries of the fall; and therefore it is said by the apostle, Acts 20:27. 'I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.' He hath kept nothing back from men that was needful to be known in order to their salvation. Hence saith he, John 15:15. 'All things that I have heard of my father I have made known unto you.' And it is said, 2 Tim. 3:15 that 'the holy scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation.' Christ hath plainly shewed us what course we are to take, that so we may obtain the friendship and favour of God here, and come to the enjoyment of him for ever hereafter. You may see what David says, Psal. 119:97. 'O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.' Christ by his word gives us a full discovery of our duty in every state and condition that we can be in while here in the world; and our relative

duties are fully revealed. See what is said by the apostle, Tit. 2:11, 12. 'For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.'

3. Christ teaches the will of God purely. His doctrine has not the least dash of error mixed with it to allay and debase it. His malicious enemies, who were continually lying at the catch, and most observant of his words and actions, could find nothing to charge him with. He preached the gospel most purely unto men. He is the true and faithful witness, Rev. 1:5. And he hath commanded his ministers to preserve the simplicity and purity of the gospel, and not to mix and sophisticate it. Hence it is said, 2 Cor. 4:2. 'We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.' And says Paul, 2 Cor. 2:17. 'We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.' Here the apostle vindicates himself from the practice of false apostles and corrupt teachers, who adulterated the word, and mingled their own errors and inventions with it, and studied to please men more than God, to advance their own temporal interests thereby, more than the salvation and eternal interests of men's souls.

4. He teaches the mind of God in a most sweet and affectionate manner. His words make men's hearts to glow and burn within them, as it was with the two disciples going to Emmaus, Luke 24:32. It was prophesied concerning him of old, that 'he should not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street,' Isa. 42:2. 'The Lord hath given him the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.' Isa. 50:4. How sweetly did his words slide into the hearts of his hearers? He drew them with the bands of love, and with the cords of a man. See how affectionately he speaks, Matth. 11:28. 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.' He discouraged none, nor upbraided any from coming to him. He assured them, that all who were willing to come should be heartily welcome, and meet with a gracious reception. His great familiarity and free

condescension to the most vile and despicable sinners were often made the matter of his reproach. Such is his gentle and sweet carriage towards his people, that the church is called the Lamb's wife, Rev. 19:7.

5. He teaches the will of God powerfully. It was observed by the multitudes that flocked about him, that he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes, Matth. 7:29. They were but dull and coldrife preachers; their words did freeze as it were between their lips: but Christ spoke with a divine efficacy and power. There was heat as well as light in his doctrine. And so is there still, though it be declared by the mouths of poor, weak, and despised men. Hence says the apostle, 2 Cor. 10:4. 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds,' &c. It is still 'quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart,' Heb. 4:14. The holy apostle imitated his great master Christ: being filled with his Spirit, he spake freely and home to the hearts of men. His words made the consciences of sinners to shake and tremble in their breasts. It is true, all faithful and able ministers are not alike gifted in this particular; but yet there is a holy seriousness, a spiritual grace and majesty in their doctrine, commanding reverence and regard from their hearers.

6. Christ teaches the will of God infallibly. The wisest and best of men may mistake, and lead others into the same mistakes with themselves: but it is not so in the teachings of Christ; for they are not subject to error and mistake. His Spirit guideth men into all truth, and into nothing but the truth, John 16:13. He is an unerring guide, and a shepherd that will not suffer his sheep to stray and wander to their eternal destruction upon the mountains of sin and vanity. All who are taught of Christ shall certainly arrive at celestial glory: for he hath said, John 10:28. 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.' His word is abundantly sufficient to make men wise unto salvation. And saith the apostle, Gal. 6:16. 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.'

7. The teachings of Christ are abiding teachings. They make deep and

indelible impressions upon the soul, which can never wear out. The words of men evanish like smoke, and fly away: but the words of Christ stick close by us. What he teacheth he writeth upon the heart. So it is promised, Jer. 31:33. 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.' It is usual with gracious souls, whose understandings have been savingly opened by the Lord, to say many times afterwards, I shall never forget such a scripture that once convinced me, and such a promise that once encouraged and comforted me. To this purpose it is said by David, Psalm. 119:93. 'I will never forget thy precepts; for with them thou hast quickened me.'

8. Christ teaches men the will of God in a saving manner. They are all made wise to salvation who are taught by him. See what the apostle Paul says of the holy scriptures, which contain this divine revelation, 2 Tim. 3:15, 16. 'The holy scriptures are able to make one wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' There is a great deal of other knowledge that goes to hell with men. The pavement of that infernal furnace, as one speaks, is pitched with the skulls of many great scholars. Many who have learned heads, have graceless hearts. But life eternal lies in the teaching of Christ. Hence says our Saviour, John 17:3. 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' This is deservedly called 'the light of life,' John 8:12. And 'in this light' men 'clearly see light,' Psal. 36:9.

You see then, from what hath been said on this head, that Christ's teachings far transcend the teachings of all others; so that it may be justly said of him, as was said by his hearers of old, 'Never man spake like this man.'

IV. I now proceed to shew for what ends Christ as a Prophet reveals the will of God; where I shall touch at the necessity of this revelation in order to salvation.

The end of this revelation is for our salvation. Man by nature is ignorant of true happiness, and of the way that leads to it. But 'the grace of God, that bringeth salvation.' i. e. the glorious gospel of Christ, 'hath appeared

unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' The great design of the gospel-revelation is to shew what course we must steer that so we may escape deserved wrath and misery, and arrive at everlasting happiness and glory. So that now we need not cry out like those of old, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' Micah 6:6, 7.

But here it may be inquired, Is not the light of nature sufficient to inform us of the way of salvation?

To this I answer in the negative. This revelation of the will of God which we have by Christ, was needful to be superadded to that, by reason of our natural darkness and blindness of mind. Men by nature know not God; their understandings are darkened through the ignorance that is in them. The whole world is involved in darkness. Though the light of nature tells us that there is a God, and that it is our duty to worship and serve him, yet it cannot teach us how we are to do it, so as to be accepted of him; as is clear in the case of the heathens, of whom it is said, Rom. 1:23. 'They changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.' They debased the adorable Deity, by entertaining unworthy conceptions of him, and performing such acts of worship to him, as were not fit for a rational nature to offer, nor for the holy and glorious Majesty of heaven to receive. Besides, they ascribed his honour and attributes to the creatures; not only to the sun, moon, and stars, and to invisible powers which they supposed governed and ruled these shining luminaries, but even to the most despicable things in nature. Birds, and beasts, and creeping things, were the objects of their adoration. Again, though the light of nature directs us to many excellent moral duties, as to honour our parents, to do to others as we would have them to deal with us, &c. yet it cannot teach us to perform these duties in an acceptable manner. The apostle tells us, that 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.' The mind of man by nature hath not only a

native blindness, by reason of which it cannot discern the things of the Spirit, but also a natural enmity that it hates the light; so that till the mind be healed and enlightened by Christ, the natural faculty can no more discern the things of the Spirit, than the sensitive faculty can discern the things of reason. It is as easy for men to read the law in tables of stone, after they are pounded and crumbled to dust, as to read true notions in lapsed and corrupt nature. This is excellently described by the apostle Paul, Eph. 4:17, 18. 'This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.' Here he terms it 'vanity of mind, darkness in the understanding, and blindness of heart.' All the essential faculties of the rational soul are entirely corrupted; the mind which is the repository of principles, that noble faculty, whereby we judge of things good and evil; the understanding, that discorsive faculty, whereby we collect one thing from another, framing conclusions from the principles of the mind, and reducing these principles into practical dictates; and the heart, i. e. the will, conscience, and affections, which were to apply these principles, and draw out these reasonings on the stage of life; all are corrupted. And the most ingenious nations for natural knowledge and civil prudence verify the apostle's character in their brutish actions. The Egyptians, who were men famous for wisdom and learning, and propagated the sciences to the other parts of the world, were worse than beasts in their worship. The Greeks, who counted their Athens the eye of the world, were not more refined, when they adored thirty thousand gods, and some of them infamous for murder and adultery, and held three hundred and twenty-four different opinions about the chief good, as learned men tell us. And the Romans, though eminent for civil prudence, were not much behind them, when they worshipped a fever, and dignified a strumpet with the title of the Goddess of Flowers. And a great philosopher among them takes notice of their ignorance of God in the various notions which they have of him. Even those among the heathens who for acts of justice and temperance might justly put many men under the gospel to the blush, have had a thick darkness upon their minds in regard of God. But here more particularly I shall shew you several things absolutely necessary to be known in order to salvation, wherein the light of nature is very

defective.—As,

1. The fall of man, which is the first cause and original spring of all our misery and woe. This is what the human understanding could never find out by its most accurate search and inquiries. For though the heathen philosophers were abundantly sensible of many confusions and disorders in their souls, and of their woful subjection to the rage and tyranny of unruly passions, yet they could never find out the fatal cause, nor trace those streams to the true original. They found indeed that something was amiss, and much amiss too; but from whence this disorder did arise, nature itself is wholly ignorant, and hath not so much as a regular guess without revelation. And though Plato seems to have had some dark notices of man's original and fallen state, when he expresses the one under the symbolic image of the golden age under Saturn's reign, and the other by the miserable iron image under the reign of Jupiter, in which he lived; yet we may warrantably conclude, that he had these discoveries from the scriptures of Jewish tradition. Origin is of opinion, that Plato understood the history of man's fall by his conversation with the Jews in Egypt. This first cause of all our misery is only made known by the scriptures. Men by nature know not the fall of Adam, which is the source and bitter root from which all their woe and trouble springs. And the light of nature is too dim and weak-sighted to pierce into the depths of Iniquity. It cannot acquaint us with the fumes of sin, and with that inward strength and power of it, which gives birth and nourishment to all those irregular actions which flow from it. There was therefore a necessity of some other light to penetrate the clouds of nature, and search into the depths of the belly, and bring to view that habitual disconformity of our natures to that rectitude required of us, and which was once possessed by us.

2. The light of nature cannot acquaint us with the true and adequate object of our religious worship, namely a Trinity of persons in the glorious Godhead. This sacred doctrine is wholly supernatural, and entirely beyond the reach of the human understanding. The most illuminated Philosophers that ever were in the world, though they found out the causes of many things, and could discourse to excellent purpose concerning the magnitude, motions, and influences of the stars, and the

nature of plants and minerals, and many other things which are veiled from vulgar minds, yet they could never by their most accurate search and enquiry find out the mystery of the Trinity. This grand article of the Christian faith was altogether hid and unknown to them. We find indeed that some of the ancient philosophers had some dark and imperfect traditions concerning the Trinity. Hence some think, that that great Oriental maxim which Pythagoras brought with him into Greece, touching God, viz. that he was *hen kai polu*, that is, one and many, was but some broken Jewish tradition of the Trinity. And the Platonists had also some weak and corrupt traditions of three hypostases, or persons, which they called Trinity. But these and the like poor notices of the Trinity, it is most probable, Pythagoras first, and Plato after him, derived originally from the Jews, if not immediately, yet mediately by the Phœnicians and Egyptians. But yet neither the Grecian, Egyptian, nor Phœnician philosophers, had any sound and true notion of this great mystery; as will appear clear and evident to any sober mind, that considers what a world of fables and contradictions they mixed with those broken discoveries which they had received concerning it. Plato himself ingenuously confesses this, when he said, that he had received many mysteries from the ancients which he did not understand, but expected some interpreter to unfold them unto him. But we find the gospel sets this mystery in a clear light. See Mat. 3:16, 17. 1 John 5:7. 2 Cor. 13:14 all of which, and other scriptures, were considered when I discoursed on the doctrine of the Trinity. The gospel gives us a clear discovery of the persons in the Godhead, as to their nature and operations, and their combined and distinct acts and expressions of goodness. We find they all concur in the work of man's redemption: the Father contrived it, the Son purchased it, and the Holy Ghost applies it.

3. The light of nature cannot inform us of the way and method of our recovery by Christ. The whole scheme of this amazing work of redemption, was without the compass of our most searching faculties. There are three things with respect to this, which I shall touch at a little; and we had never known any of them unless they had been revealed. As,

(1.) The mystery of eternal election. From all eternity God foresaw that man should fall, and thereby plunge himself into an abyss of sin and

misery, and that it would not be possible to recover himself out of it, neither could he receive help from any creature in heaven or earth; and God not intending that the whole race of man should perish, and become the eternal trophies of hell, set apart a certain number in his eternal purpose and decree, whom he designed to make vessels of mercy, and bring to the fruition of endless, glory, to the everlasting praise of the invincible efficacy of his sovereign grace and rich mercy in Christ. So the apostle teaches us, Eph. 1:4, 5, 6 upon which passage I formerly discoursed in the course of this work. This is indeed a profound mystery, which could never have been discovered by the clearest sighted reason: but the great Prophet of the church hath revealed it unto us.

(2.) We had never known the astonishing method of redemption, by which the elect are brought into a state of salvation, unless it had been revealed: How that God from all eternity entered into a covenant with his own Son, promising him assistance, a numerous seed, and great dignity and glory, if he would undertake the work of redemption, and free the elect from sin and wrath; whereupon Christ cheerfully condescended, and engaged to become the Sinner's Surety, to pay the debt: he was content to stand in his people's room, and submit himself to the avenging strokes of justice: he was willing to become a curse, that they might receive a blessing; to become poor, that they might be made rich; to be accused and condemned, that they might be justified; and to endure the shock of his Father's wrath, that they might go free. Hence he is brought in by the Psalmist offering himself as Surety in their stead, Psal. 40:6, 7. 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me.' He willingly yielded to all the conditions which were required for the accomplishment of that great and difficult work. He was content to take a body, that he might be capable to suffer. The debt could not be paid, nor the articles of the covenant performed, but in the human nature. He was therefore to have a nature capable of and prepared for sufferings. Hence it is said, Heb. 10:5. 'A body hast thou prepared me.' He behoved to have a body to suffer that which was represented by those legal sacrifices wherein God took no pleasure. And he took a body of flesh, surrounded with all the infirmities of our fallen nature, sin only excepted. The incarnation of Christ is a great

mystery, which could never have entered into the thoughts either of angels or men, unless it had been brought to light by the gospel. Hence says the apostle, 1 Tim. 3:16. 'Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh,' &c. But of this I spoke at large when treating of the incarnation of our Redeemer.

(3.) The light of nature could never tell us, that it is by faith in Christ that we must be saved. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life,' John 3:16. He is set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. It is only through faith in Christ that the elect can be saved. All that believe in him are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. We are commanded to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall have everlasting life. Now, this way of salvation is above the strain and reach of natural reason to attain to the knowledge of it. There are some seminal sparks of the law in the hearts of men by nature; some common principles of piety, justice, and charity, without which the world would soon disband, and fall into confusion. But there is not the least conjecture of the contrivance of the gospel. It could never have entered into the thoughts of the Israelites, that by looking to a brazen serpent erected on a pole, the wounds should be healed which they received by the bitings of the fiery serpents. And as little could guilty man find out a way to satisfy divine justice by the death and sufferings of a Mediator, and to heal the wounded spirit by believing on Christ crucified. The most active and inquiring reason could never have thought of the wonders of the incarnation, and that a virgin should conceive, and a God be born. Nor could it have dreamed of the death and sufferings of the Prince of life, and of the resurrection and ascension of the Lord of glory. Now, the human understanding, as bright and clear as it is corrupt, yet it could not, by all the help of argumentation and reasoning, arrive at the knowledge of it. Supernatural revelation was absolutely necessary to discover it to the holy angels. The apostle tells us, Eph. 3:10. 'Unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, is made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' This was a mystery locked up in the breast of God, of which the angels seem to have had no thoughts, till the revelation of it was made to the church. And even since that discovery, these wise and intelligent beings have not a perfect knowledge of the

whole of the gospel-state; for they are still making further enquiries: 'Which things,' says the apostle, 'the angels desire to look into,' 1 Pet. 1:12.

4. The light of nature does not inform men of the evil there is in the first inclinations to sin. The heathen philosophers allowed the disorder of the sensitive appetite to be innocent and harmless, till it pass to the supreme part of the soul, and induces it to deliberate or resolve upon moral actions. For they were ignorant of that original and intimate pollution that cleaves to human nature. And because our faculties are natural, they thought that the first motions to forbidden objects were natural desires, and not the irregularities of lust. Accordingly all their precepts reach no further than the counsels of the heart; but the desires and motions of the lower faculties, though very culpable, are left by them indifferent. So that it is quite evident, that there are many stains and defilements in their purgative virtues. The law of God requires holiness and purity in all the habits and dispositions of the soul, an entire conformity to the will of God in all its various motions and actings; or else we can never be happy: for the scripture tells us, that he must have clean hands and a pure heart, that would ascend into the hill of God, and stand in his holy place; and that it is only the pure in heart that shall see God.

5. The light of nature and philosophy, improved to the highest height, is very defective in respect of piety, and in many things contrary to it; as will appear from the following particulars.

(1.) By delivering unworthy notions and conceptions of the Deity. Not only the vulgar heathens changed the truth of God into a lie, when they measured his immense and incomprehensible perfections by the narrow compass of their shallow imaginations: but the most renowned philosophers among them highly dishonoured God by their base and unbecoming apprehensions of him. For the true notion of God signifies a being infinite, independent, the universal Creator and powerful Preserver of heaven and earth, and the absolute Director of all events; that his providence superintends and takes notice of all the motions and actions of his creatures; and that he is a liberal rewarder of those that seek him, and a just revenger of those that violate his holy and righteous laws. Now, all this was contradicted by some of them. Some asserted the world to be eternal, and others that matter was so, and in that denied him to be the

first cause of all things. Some limited his being, confining him to one of the poles of heaven? others extended it only to, the amplitude of the world. The Epicureans totally denied his governing providence, and made him an idle spectator of things here below. They maintained and asserted, that God was contented with his own majesty and glory; and that whatever was without him, was neither in his thoughts nor care; as if to be employed in the various accidents of the world were inconsistent with his own felicity. Thus, by confining his power who is infinite, they denied him in confessing him. There were others who allowed him to regard the great affairs of kingdoms and nations, and to manage crowns, and sceptres, and matters of state: but to stoop so low as to regard particular things, they judged to be as unbecoming the divine nature, as for the sun to descend from the firmament to light a candle for a servant in the dark. They took the sceptre out of God's hand, and set up a foolish and blind power to dispose of all mutable things. Some again made him a servant to nature, that he necessarily turned the spheres. Others subjected him to an invincible destiny, that he could not do what he desired. And thus the wisest of the heathens dishonoured the Deity by their false imaginations of him; and, instead of representing him with his proper attributes, drew a picture of themselves.

(2.) Philosophy and Nature's light is very defective as to piety, in not injoining the love of God. The first and great command of the law is this, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and strength.' Yet these philosophers speak little or nothing of this, which is the principal part of natural religion. Aristotle, for as clear-sighted as he was in other things, yet when he discourses of God, is not only affectedly obscure to conceal his ignorance, but even in his morals, where he had reason to consider the Deity as an object most worthy of our love and obedience in an infinite degree, he totally omits such a representation of him, though the love of God is that alone which gives value and price to all other virtues. And this is the reason why philosophy is so defective as to rules for preparing men for an intimate and delightful communion with God, which is the effect of holy and perfect love, and the supreme happiness of the reasonable nature. And if, in the Platonic philosophy there are some things directing to this, yet they are but coldly expressed, and so dark and obscure, that, like inscriptions on ancient medals or

marbles which are defaced, they are hardly legible. It is the singular character of the gospel, which distinguishes it from all human institutions, that it represents the infinite amiableness of God and his beauty and goodness to us, to excite and draw out our affections to him in a superlative manner. It commands us to follow him as dear children, and presses us to seek for those gracious dispositions which may qualify us for the enjoyment of him in a way of friendship and love.

(3.) The best philosophers laid down this servile and pernicious maxim, That a wise man should always conform to the religion of his country. Socrates, who acknowledged one supreme God, yet advised his friends to comply with the common idolatry, without any difference in the outward worship of him and creatures: and those who did otherwise he branded as superstitious and vain. And his own practice was according to this advice which he had given; for he frequented the temples, and assisted at the sacrifices, which he declared before his judges, to purge himself of the crime of which he was accused. And Seneca, speaking of the Heathen worship, acknowledges that it was unreasonable, and only the multitude of fools made it excusable: yet he would have a philosopher to conform to these customs, in obedience to the law, not as pleasing to the gods. Thus they made religion a dependant on the state. They performed the rights of Heathenish superstition, that were either filthy, fantastical, or cruel, such as the devil, the master of these ceremonies, ordained. They became less than men by worshipping the most vile and despicable creatures: and therefore God gave them up to the vilest lusts, carnal impurity being a just punishment of spiritual. Rom. 1:23, 24.

(4.) Philosophy is very defective in not propounding the glory of God as the chief and ultimate end to which all our actions should refer. Now, the philosophers had other views and designs than this, in their precepts and dictates. As,

[1.] To make use of virtue as a means to gain honour and reputation in the world. This was plainly discovered in their books and actions. They were sick of self-love, and did many things to satisfy the eye. They led their lives as in a scene, where one person is within, and another is represented without, by an artificial imitation of what is true. They were swelled with presumption in having little merit, and a great deal of

vanity. Now, this respect which men have to the opinion of others, corrupts the intention and vitiates the action. It is not sincere virtue, but a superficial appearance, that is regarded; for it is sufficient to that purpose to seem to be virtuous without being so. And from hence he may discover that many of their most specious actions were but disguised sins; their virtues were as false as their deities. Or,

[2.] The end of philosophy was to prevent the many mischiefs which licentiousness and disorders might bring upon men from without, or to preserve peace and tranquillity within, by suppressing the turbulent passions arising from lust or rage, which trouble and discompose the mind. This was the pretended design of Epicurus, to whom virtue was amiable only as the instrument of pleasure. Or,

[3.] The highest design of philosophy was to propound and expose to view the beauty of virtue, and its charming aspect, as the most worthy motive to draw and influence the affections. Now, supposing that some of the heathens (though very few), by discovering the internal beauty of virtue, were taken with, and had a love to it, and performed some things without any private respect, but for the rectitude of the action, and the inward satisfaction that springs from it; yet they were still defective: for virtue is but a ray of the Deity; and our duty is not complete, unless it be referred to his glory, who is the principle and pattern of it. In short, the great Creator made man for himself: and it is most just and reasonable, that as his favour is our sovereign happiness, so his glory should be our supreme end, without which nothing is regular and truly beautiful.

From all which the necessity of Christ's teaching, and of a divine revelation, clearly appears.

But I must conclude this subject with some improvement.

1. From this doctrine we may infer the continual necessity of a standing ministry. Christ is gone into heaven, and will continue there until the time of the restitution of all things; but by his ministers and ambassadors he daily teaches and instructs us, and for that purpose hath fixed them in the church by a firm and lasting constitution, which shall remain to the end of the world, Matth. 28:16, 20. This is a great and valuable privilege,

which we ought highly to prize, and carefully to improve. This alone is sufficient to counterbalance the greatest outward affliction that people can meet with in the world; and therefore we have that promise, Isa. 30:20. 'Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers.'

2. The most rude and ignorant may be taught, seeing Christ executes the office of a Teacher. He can teach the most stupid, and give them an understanding to know the truths of the gospel. Therefore ignorance can be no excuse to gospel-hearers, to whom Christ offers himself as a Teacher. Let the most ignorant among you apply to him, and he will teach you more than the most accomplished philosophers could ever attain by all their improvements of natural light.

3. The weakest Christians need not be discouraged at the dulness and incapacity which they find in themselves: for Christ can easily reveal that to babes which is hid from the wise and prudent: 'The testimonies of the Lord are sure (says the Psalmist), making wise the simple.' Yea, the Lord delights to chuse such as you are, that his grace may appear the more conspicuous in your weakness, 1 Cor. 1:26, 27. Well then, weak but serious Christian, be not discouraged, because you are not so docile and quick in your apprehensions of things as others about you. Many of your neighbours may know more in other things than you do: but you are not incapable of knowing so much as is necessary to the salvation of your soul, and shall certainly know it, if Christ be your Teacher; and that is sufficient to make you happy for ever. Others indeed may far excel you in the knowledge of other things: but if you know Jesus Christ, and the truth as it is in Jesus, one drop of your knowledge is more valuable and desirable than a whole sea of their natural and political knowledge. One precious truth sucked from the breast of Christ by faith and prayer, is infinitely better than ten thousand dry notions, hewn out by racking and torturing the understanding.

4. Prayer is a proper means for the increase of knowledge. Prayer is the golden key that unlocks that sacred treasure. When Daniel was to expound that secret which was contained in the king's dream, about which the Chaldean magicians had racked their brains to no purpose, you

see he addressed God by Prayer, Dan. 2:17, 18 and you see there what success he had, the secret was revealed to him. Luther was wont to say, Three things made a divine, viz. meditation, temptation, and prayer. And a holy man in our neighbouring nation was wont to study upon his knees. And indeed those truths which are got by prayer leave an unusual sweetness upon the heart. In the use of means you should have your eyes towards Christ, and pray that he would open your understandings, and enlighten your minds with saving knowledge. This was David's practice. See Psal. 119:18, 33, 34.

5. Learn from this what entertainment ye are to give to the word. Be not strangers to your Bibles; but read them as Christ's word to you, with reverence, faith, and love. Make, conscience of attending on the preaching of the word, catechising, and the dispensing of the sacraments; and set yourselves to drink up the doctrine of Christ from himself as your Teacher. If people believed that Christ were exercising his prophetic office among them in that way, they would not dare to treat these exercises as they do.

6. See here the abomination of the Quakers and other enthusiasts, who separate the Spirit from the word. To these may be added those who take up the principles without ground from the word, upon the credit of dreams, visions, voices, and impressions. And much more those who do so upon their own light fancies, without serious examination of them by the word. The practices of all such are an abomination to the Lord; they act in direct opposition to Christ as the great Teacher sent from God; and consequently the light that is in them is darkness.

7. See also the abomination of formalists and legal professors, who know nothing of religion but Do, do. Being unacquainted with a due sense of their own emptiness and darkness in spiritual things, and with the way of making use of Christ as a Prophet, they content themselves with the word without the Spirit, and what they can hammer out of it on their own anvil, so separating the word from the Spirit. And thus they live ignorant of the Spirit's irradiations on the word, and his clearing up scripture-truths to them; which are only had in the way of the soul's going out of itself and its own wisdom to Christ, in a way of believing and depending on him for influences of light and knowledge. This is the neck-break and ruin of

many in our day.

8. Wo to them, then, that have the teaching of the word without the Spirit. Ah! do men think nothing to hear so much, and to be illuminated by the Spirit in nothing? Christ may be a Prophet to others, but he cannot be one to such. Let them seriously consider that awful passage, 2 Cor. 4:3, 4. 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

9. Receive Christ as a Prophet, and learn to make use of him daily as such. Renounce your own wit and wisdom, and receive instruction from the mouth of this divine Teacher, who teaches to profit. Be of a docile disposition, willing and inclined to be taught of God: for the meek will he teach his way. And, for the Lord's sake, refuse not to hearken to the voice of this great Prophet, otherwise it will be your ruin. Consider the awful certification in the 23d verse of the chapter where our text lies, 'And it shall come to pass, that every soul that will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.' Hear him, then, and 'beware lest that come upon you which is spoken in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish,' Acts 13:40, 41.

10. Lastly, Would you know if ye be taught of God? I offer you the following marks.

(1.) Christ's teachings are very humbling to the soul. Human knowledge puffeth up; but divine knowledge abaseth and casteth down. It empties a man of all conceit of his own worth, and fills him with low and abasing thoughts of himself. So it was with Job, chap. 42:5, 6. 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' The same light of the Spirit which discovers unto us the glorious greatness and majesty of God, and his other shining perfections, discovers also, at the same time, the vileness, baseness, emptiness and utter unworthiness of man, yea of the best and holiest of men, as in the case of Isaiah, chap. 6:5. 'Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of

hosts.' When Paul got a saving sight of Christ, he calls himself the least of all saints, and the chief of sinners. Were you ever deeply humbled before the Lord and made to see your own emptiness and vileness? Those who are puffed up with pride and self-conceit, are strangers to the teaching of Christ.

(2.) The teachings of Christ deeply affect and impress the heart. They fully reach the soul of a sinner, Hos. 2:14. 'I will speak comfortably unto her;' or, as in the original, 'I will speak to her heart.' When Christ sheweth unto men the great evil and danger of sin, he so convinceth and toucheth the soul, that no creature-comforts can yield any pleasure or sweetness, but prove all tasteless and insipid, and have no more pleasure than the white of an egg. And when he speaks peace to the soul, and intimates the pardon of sin, he so comforts and refreshes it, that no afflictions or pressures, however heavy and uneasy, have any weight or bitterness in them at all. One drop of consolation from heaven sweetens a whole sea of trouble upon earth, and fills the soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Says the Psalmist, Psal. 94:19. 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.'

(3.) The teachings of Christ are sanctifying and renewing: they change and reform the heart, Eph. 4:21, 22, 23. 'If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, Which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.' You see here that holiness and purity is the effect of divine teaching; holiness both external and internal, negative and positive. All the discoveries of God which Christ makes to the soul have an assimilating quality, and change it into his own likeness, 2 Cor. 3:18.

(4.) All Christ's teachings are practical, issuing in cheerful obedience. Idle notions and useless speculations are not learned from Christ. As his creating words, so his teaching words, are always attended with effect. As when he said, 'Let there be light, and there was light;' so when he says to a soul, Be thou humbled, it is effectually humbled; as in the case of Job, chap. 40:4, 5. 'Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer: yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.' And when he says, Be thou

comforted, comfort immediately follows, Isa. 66:13. 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you: and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.'

(5.) Christ's teachings are always agreeable to the written word. The Spirit of Christ and the word of Christ never disagree, as John 14:26. 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.' When he speaks to the heart of a sinner, whether in a way of conviction, instruction, or consolation, he either makes use of the express words of scripture, or speaks to the heart in a language every way agreeable thereunto. So that the written word becomes the standard and touchstone to weigh and try all doctrines by, Isa. 8:20. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' Whatever differs from the scriptures of truth, must not pass for an inspiration of God, but is a deluding sophism and insinuation of the devil.

(6.) You will have a great love to your teacher, and will be in case to say with David, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee,' Psal. 73:25.

OF CHRIST'S PRIESTLY OFFICE

HEBREWS 7:17.—Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

IT is evident from the context, that the apostle is speaking of Christ as a Priest, applying to him this passage taken from Psal. 110:4. Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec. Where two things are proposed; 1. That he is indeed a Priest, whose business it is to offer sacrifices. 2. That he is so after the order of Melchisedec; noting thereby the similitude betwixt the two, the one being a notable type of the other.

This likeness consists not in an unbloody sacrifice, that of bread and wine, which Melchisedec brought forth to Abraham when he returned from the slaughter of the kings who had taken Sodom and Gomorrah; but, (1.) In the name, Christ being the true 'King of righteousness,' and 'King of peace,' in which respect Melchisedec was only a type of him, Heb. 7:2. (2.) In their original; ver. 3. Melchisedec is represented as 'without father, without mother, without descent, having no beginning of days;' nothing being recorded of his birth and parentage, he is like an immortal. In this he was a notable type of Christ, who had no father as man, no mother as God, was God himself from eternity, and his goings forth were of old, from everlasting. (3.) In their continuance, because Melchisedec's death is no where recorded, ver. 8.; but is represented as one who liveth. So Christ our High Priest liveth for ever, to make intercession for us. (4.) In their office, Melchisedec was priest of the most high God, and king of Salem, or Jerusalem. So Christ is a Priest, who offered himself a sacrifice to God, and he is constituted King of Zion, of the church. (5.) In respect of unity. Melchisedec is set forth as having neither predecessor nor successor in his office. So Christ was set up to be a priest from everlasting, and is represented as a lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and the sacrifice that he offered being perfect, there is no more occasion for any other priests; and he has no successor, having an unchangeable and perpetual priesthood. (6.) In respect of dignity; Melchisedec being proposed as greater than Abraham. So Christ is greater than both: for he said, 'Before Abraham was, I am.' Thus Christ is a Priest, and that for ever. In this office is contained the grand relief of poor souls distressed and perplexed with the guilt and burden of their sins. When all other remedies have been tried in vain, it is the blood of the sacrifice of Christ, sprinkled by faith upon the trembling conscience, that must cool and refresh, and sweetly compose and settle it.

The doctrine arising from the text is,

DOCT. 'Christ executeth the office of a Priest, in his once offering himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew that Christ is truly and properly a Priest.

II. Explain the nature of Christ's priestly office.

III. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to shew that Christ is truly and properly a Priest. This is evident, if we consider, 1. That the scripture holds him forth as such, Psal. 110:4 and Heb. 5 and other places of that epistle. 2. Because he exercises the acts of the priestly office, in offering sacrifice, and praying for his people. 3. Because he was typified by such as were really priests, as all the Levitical priests, and Melchisedec.

Quest. Wherein did Christ's priestly office differ from the priestly office under the ceremonial law?

1. The priests under the law were priests after the order of Aaron: but Christ is a priest after the order of Melchisedec. Who this Melchisedec was, it is in vain to inquire, and cannot possibly be known; the Holy Ghost designedly concealing his genealogy, beginning and ending, and descent, that so he might be a fitter type of Christ and his everlasting priesthood. He was like a man dropt from the clouds, and at last caught up again, and none knew how. It is said of him, Heb. 7:3 that he was 'without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.' Now, Christ was a Priest after the order of this Melchisedec, not by a corporeal unction, legal ceremony, or the intervening act of a human ordination, but by a divine and heavenly institution, and immediate unction of the Spirit of life, in that extraordinary manner, whereby he was to be both King and priest unto God, as Melchisedec was, Heb. 7:16. He was not a Priest after the order of Aaron, because the law made nothing perfect, but was weak and unprofitable; and therefore was to be abolished, and to give place to another priesthood. Men were not to rest in it, but to be led by it to him who was to abolish it, Heb. 7:11, 12. The ministry and promises of Christ were better than those of the law; and therefore his priesthood, which was the office of dispensing them, was to be more excellent too, Heb. 8:6. For when the law and covenant were to be abolished, the priesthood, in

which they were established, was likewise to die.

2 The priests under the law were sinful men, and therefore offered sacrifices for their own sins, as well as for the sins of the people, Heb. 5:3. But Christ was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did once when he offered up himself,' Heb. 7:26, 27. He was perfectly pure and holy, and could stand before God even in the eye of his strict justice, 'as a lamb without blemish and without spot.' Though he 'made his soul an offering for sin,' yet he 'had done no iniquity, neither was there any guile found in his mouth.' And indeed his sacrifice had done us no good, had he been tainted with the least sin.

3. The priests under the law were many, because they were mortal; death as an universal deluge was continually sweeping them off the stage. But Christ as a Priest for ever, Psal. 110:4. Heb. 7:23. 'This man continueth ever.'

4. The priesthood under the law was changeable; but Christ's priesthood is unchangeable. The legal dispensation was to continue only for a time. It was but like the morning star to usher in the rising sun, which so soon as he appears in our horizon, it evanishes and shrinks away, Heb. 7:12. God confirmed this priesthood with an oath, Psal. 110:4. Heb. 7:21 as well as a King. Those offices which were divided before between two families, were both united and vested in Christ; this being absolutely necessary for the discharge of his Mediatory undertaking, and for the establishment of his kingdom, which being of another kind than the kingdoms of this world, even spiritual and heavenly, therefore needed such a King as was also a minister of holy things. And the apostle tells us, Heb. 7:24 that 'this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.'

5. The priests under the law offered many sacrifices, and of various kinds, as lambs and rams, calves and bullocks, and the blood of many beasts: but Christ offered but once, and that but one sacrifice, even the sacrifice of himself. So it is said, Heb. 9:25, 26. 'Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year, with the blood of others; (for then must he often have suffered since the

foundation of the world): but now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.' And herein he excelled and far transcended all other priests, in this, that he had something of his own to offer. He had a body given him to be at his own disposal for this very end and purpose. It is said, Heb. 10:5, 7, 10. 'Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not but a body hast thou prepared me. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.' He offered up his body, and not only his body, but his soul also was made an offering for sin, Isa. 53:10. We had made a forfeiture both of our souls and bodies by sin. It was therefore necessary that the sacrifice of Christ should be answerable to the debt which we owed to God. And when Christ came to offer up his sacrifice he stood not only in the capacity of a Priest, but also in that of a Surety; and so his soul stood in the stead of ours, and his body in the stead of our bodies.

6. All those sacrifices that the priests offered under the law were types of the sacrifice of Christ, which he was to offer in the fulness of time, they not being sufficient in themselves to purge away sin, nor acceptable to God any further than Christ was eyed in them. But Christ's sacrifice was the thing typified by all these oblations, and is efficacious in itself for the satisfaction of justice, and the expiation of sin, Heb. 10:1, 4, 14. 'For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' His sacrifice was invaluablely precious, and of infinite efficacy and virtue. And such it behoved to be: for it being offered as an expiatory sacrifice, it ought to be proportioned and equivalent, in its own intrinsic value, to all the souls and bodies that were to be redeemed by it. So that as one rich diamond is more in worth than ten thousand pebbles, or one piece of gold than many counters, so the sacrifice of Christ's soul and body is far more valuable than all the souls and bodies in the world.

7. The priests under the law appeared before God in behalf of the people, in the temple made with hands; but Christ appeareth in heaven itself. The Levitical priests offered sacrifices and made prayers for the people in the temple; and the high priest, who was an eminent type of Christ, entered into the holy of holies, the figure of heaven, once a-year, and that not without blood. This was typical of Christ's entering into heaven itself in his people's name, to appear for them before the throne of God. Hence it is said, Heb. 9:24. 'For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.' 1 John 2:1. 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.'

8. The priests under the law had only the office of priesthood; but Christ is Prophet, Priest, and King.

II. Let us take a view of the nature of Christ's priesthood. The office of the priests was to offer sacrifices, and to pray for the people. Hence there are two parts of Christ's priestly office, namely, oblation of the sacrifice, and intercession.

Of CHRIST'S OBLATION

One part of Christ's priestly office was the oblation of a sacrifice. Where we may consider,

1. The import of offering.
2. What was the sacrifice.
3. How often he did offer himself.
4. For whom he did so.
5. For what ends he did offer himself.
6. The efficacy of his one offering.

First, I am to shew what the import of offering is. It signifies the voluntariness of Christ's sufferings, Eph. 5:2. 'Christ hath given himself

for us, an offering, and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. He laid down his life of himself, that he might take it again. 'He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.' For,

1. Though he well knew his sufferings beforehand, and that dreadful storm of the divine wrath and indignation that was to fall upon him, and all the abuse, indignities, and torments, he was to meet with from wicked men and on the cross, yet he did not withdraw from that dreadful apparatus of a violent death when his time was come; he would not suffer his disciples, could they have done it, to rescue him from the impending danger: nay his delivering himself up to his blood-thirsty pursuers, after he had exhibited a remarkable instance of his divine power, in making them fall to the ground with a word, John 18:28 was an evidence, that he was nowise constrained, but a hearty volunteer in his then intended offering. The cup of his sufferings was continually before his eyes; he never declined to drink of it: yea, he was pained and straitened till he drank it to the bottom.

2. The strong cry he uttered immediately before his yielding up his soul on the cross, was an evidence there was more than a natural power attending him in that important crisis. He was no criminal in the eye of God and scripture, and could not have been put to death unless he had pleased, being the most high God, and Sovereign of men and angels, and therefore having the whole creation at his command. The strong cry he then uttered was not the effect of weakness or reluctance to part with his life, such as a criminal may be supposed to give, but rather a shout of triumph, proceeding from one who had spontaneously offered himself to such a dreadful death, testifying before God, angels, and men, his joy and exultation in having performed the arduous work he had of his own proper motion engaged to achieve.

Secondly, Let us consider what was the sacrifice he offered up. On this head it may not be improper to observe, that sacrifices were of two sorts.

1. Some were eucharistical, or thank-offerings in testimony of homage, subjection, duty, and service; as the dedication of the first fruits, the meat and drink offerings. By these the sacrificer acknowledged the bounty and

goodness of God, and his own unworthiness to receive the least of his favours, rendered praise for mercies received, and desired the divine blessing. But Christ's sacrifice was not of this kind.

2. Some sacrifices were expiatory, for the satisfaction of justice, and the purging away of sin. The institution of this kind of sacrifices was upon a double account. (1.) That man is a sinner, and therefore obnoxious to the just indignation and extreme displeasure of the holy and righteous God, and laid fairly open to all the fierceness of wrath and vengeance. (2.) That God was to be propitiated, that so he might pardon man. These truths are rooted and deeply engraven in the natural consciences of men, as appears by the pretended expiations of sin among the Heathens. But they are more clearly revealed in sacred writ. Under the law, without the effusion of blood there was no remission, to intimate unto us, that God would not forgive sin without the atonement of justice, which required the death of the offender: but it being tempered with mercy, accepted of a sacrifice in his stead.

Of this last kind was the sacrifice of Christ, which he offered for us, even a sacrifice of expiation. All this was requisite to a real and proper sacrifice, concurred in his sacrifice. As,

1. The person offering was to be a priest. It was the peculiar office of a priest under the law to offer sacrifices. So says the apostle, Heb. 5:1. 'Every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.' In like manner Christ, that he might offer this sacrifice, was called to that office, and made an High Priest in the house of God; as appears from Heb. 5:4, 5, 6, and 10. He is called 'the Apostle and High Priest of our profession; and it is said, 'Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.'

2. There was something to be offered, and that was himself, He was the sacrifice that he offered up unto God. Our great High Priest behoved to have a sacrifice answerable to the debt that we owed to God; and the debt was the forfeiture of both soul and body to the wrath of God, and the curse of the law: and therefore our High Priest was to have a soul and body to suffer in as our Surety. 'He made his soul an offering for sin,' Isa.

53:10. 'My soul,' says he 'is exceeding sorrowful even unto death. A body hast thou prepared me,' Heb. 10:5. And it is said, Heb. 10:10. 'We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once. He himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree,' 1 Pet. 2:24. He took upon him our nature, that he might have a proper sacrifice to offer. Christ was a sacrifice in his human nature. He suffered in his soul and body. It is to be observed, that doing or suffering belongs to the whole person. Hence the church is said to be redeemed with 'the blood of God,' Acts 20:28. Yet the notion of a sacrifice importing suffering, and the divine nature not being capable of it, he himself was the sacrifice indeed, not in the divine, but in the human nature. Even as a murderer is said to kill a man, though he kill not the soul. Now, that he suffered in his body, appears from the history of his passion in the evangelists. And his soul-sufferings also are evident from the same history. His sufferings in his soul he himself testifies, when he says, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.' These were the soul of his sufferings, and far greater than those of his body. They consisted (1.) In his being deserted of God, whereby all comfort was eclipsed from his holy soul, Psal. 22:1. 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (2.) In the impressions of God's wrath on it, which produced that bloody sweat in the garden, by which blood transpired from his sacred body. God knew how to let him feel his wrath as our Surety; and yet was pleased with him as a Son. (3.) In the assaults of the powers of darkness and spiritual wickednesses, who assailed him with redoubled fury in that hour of darkness. The prince of this world attacked him more fiercely then than ever before.

3. There was an altar on which this sacrifice was offered: for it is the altar that sanctifieth the offering, and renders it acceptable to God, and useful to man; and that was his divine nature. 'Through the eternal Spirit,' says the apostle, 'he offered himself without spot unto God,' Heb. 9:14 and so by his blood purgeth our consciences from dead works. For Christ as God sanctified himself as man, that so, through the virtue and merit of his sacrifice, his people might be sanctified also, John 17:19. There behoved to be something to add an infinite value and efficacy to the sufferings of his humanity; which could be nothing else but the divine nature. The human nature suffered, and the divine nature sanctified the humanity; and, by reason of this admirable union, and the reflection of the Divinity

upon the humanity, what was done to the human nature upon the cross is ascribed to the whole person. They 'crucified the Lord of glory,' says the apostle; and, 'God purchased the church with his own blood.' It was this that made his sufferings acceptable and highly pleasing to God, whose justice was to be appeased and satisfied; and it was this that made them efficacious for man, whose happiness and commerce with God were to be restored and his guilt removed. So that he had a human nature that served for a sacrifice, and a divine nature wherein he subsisted, from whence that sacrifice derived an infinite dignity and value. Thus Christ was a priest in his person, a sacrifice in his humanity, and the altar in his Divinity.

4. In a sacrifice the things offered were to be of God's appointment, or else it had not been an acceptable sacrifice, but will worship; and no more a sacrifice on God's account, than the cutting off a dog's neck, or offering swine's blood, as appears by the law given by Moses concerning free-will offerings, Lev. 5. So that what Christ offered was appointed and prepared by God. He prepared him a body, that he might offer it for a sacrifice. It was a living body, a body animated with a rational soul, which soul was separated from his body in the offering; and therefore he is said to 'have made his soul an offering for sin;' and that soul and body constituted his human nature. This was the sacrifice that was appointed of God for the expiation of the elect's sin. Hence says the apostle, 1 Pet. 1:18, 19. 'Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold;—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

5. The thing offered in sacrifice was to be destroyed. This is essential to a sacrifice. Those things that were endued with life were killed, that so they might be offered to God in sacrifice, and their blood was poured out, and the other parts of them, besides the blood were burned with fire, either wholly or in part. And thus was Christ sacrificed. His dying and bleeding on the cross, answered the killing and shedding of the blood of the Levitical sacrifices: and his sufferings (expressed by the pains of hell) were correspondent to the burning of these sacrifices. It is said, Heb. 13:12, 13. 'Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.' His sufferings without the gate

are held forth here, as answering the burning of the sacrifices without the camp.

6. The person to whom the sacrifices were offered, was God, and he only. It was gross idolatry to offer them to any other. Hence they are called 'things pertaining to God,' Heb. 5:1 and Christ's sacrifice was thus offered up to God, Heb. 2:17. He performed the office of a merciful and faithful High Priest in offering up himself a sacrifice to God. God was the party offended by man's sin, and whose justice behoved to be satisfied, Eph. 5:2. Here is a mystery of wonders, where one party is the party offended, the priest, and the sacrifice.

Thirdly, I come now to consider how often Christ did offer himself. It was only once, Heb. 9:28. 'Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;' and that one and once offering fully answered the end of his offering himself: for, says the apostle, 'by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,' Heb. 10:14. This was the difference, as I have observed above, between the Levitical priests and our High Priest, that they offered many sacrifices, which argued the imperfection of their ministry; but Christ only once, Heb. 10:14 just cited. As for the notion of the sacrament's being changed into a sacrifice, as the Papists pretend, there is no foundation for it: for there Christ is not offered to God, but to us; and it is no renewal of that sacrifice, but a solemn commemoration of it.

Fourthly, I go on to shew for whom Christ offered himself a sacrifice.

1. It was not for his own sins, for he had none; but for the sins and transgressions of others, Dan. 9:26. 'The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself.' He could not suffer for any sin of his own; for he was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.' Though he made his soul an offering for sin, yet he had done no iniquity, neither was guile found in his mouth. As the legal lambs were without blemish, so Christ was a Lamb without spot. His extraordinary and miraculous conception in the womb of a virgin was an effectual bar against original sin, and he had no actual sin in the course of his life. He was infinitely holy as God, and habitually holy as man. Every power and faculty of his soul, and every member of his body, was elevated and raised to the highest pitch of

holiness. And he fulfilled all righteousness in his life, and gave complete satisfaction to all the demands of the law; so that he needed not, as the Levitical priests, first to offer sacrifice for his own sin, and then for the sins of the people.

2. Christ did not offer up this sacrifice for the sins of fallen angels; for there was no sacrifice appointed for them. Whenever they rebelled against their sovereign Lord and Creator, they were immediately expelled from the divine presence, and are kept in everlasting chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day. Christ took not upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. He offered up the sacrifice of himself to make an atonement for the sins of men.

3. Christ did not die a sacrifice for every man and woman in the world. It is true, there was virtue and efficacy enough in his oblation to satisfy offended justice for the sins of the whole world, yea, and of millions of worlds more; for his blood hath infinite value, because of the infinite dignity and excellency of his person. And in this sense some divines understand those places of scripture where he is called the Saviour of the whole world. Yet the efficacy and saving virtue of his sacrifice extendeth not unto all. For,

1st. It is restricted in scripture to a certain number, called sometimes the church of God, as Acts 20:28. 'Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood,' Eph. 5:25. 'Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it.' Sometimes they are called his sheep, as John 10:15. 'I lay down my life for my sheep.' They are also called those that were given to him by the Father, John 17:2. 'Thou hast given him power of all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.' See also John 10:26–29. In these places of scripture, and others that might be named, you see that Christ's death is restricted to a certain number of persons, exclusive of all others.

2dly, If Christ would not pray for every one in the world, then certainly he did not die for every one in particular. But so it is that he excludes the reprobate world from the benefit of his prayer, John 17:9. 'I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me.' Both the parts of Christ's priesthood, his offering sacrifice and his intercession, are of the

same latitude and extent. We find them joined together in the scripture by an inseparable connection, Rom. 8:34. 'It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us, 1 John 2:1, 2. 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins. So that Christ intercedes for all those for whom he satisfied offended justice: but he intercedes not for the whole world, but only for those whom God hath given him; and therefore he did not satisfy offended justice for all men.

3dly, Christ's death is an act of the highest love that ever was or can be manifested to the world. 'Greater love,' says he, 'hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' And says the apostle, Rom. 5:8. 'God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' Now, it is plain, and cannot be denied, that every one of Adam's posterity is not the object of Christ's dearest love: and therefore he did not lay down his life for every one of them.

4thly, To affirm that Christ offered up himself a sacrifice with a design and intention to save all mankind, great absurdities would follow. As,

(1.) That Christ died for many, yea for innumerable multitudes, who never heard of his blessed name, nor of the blessings and benefits which were purchased by his death.—But this runs cross to the strain and current of the scripture, which tells us plainly, that there can be no salvation but by faith in Christ; and that without hearing of him there can be no faith, Rom. 10:14, 15, 16.

(2.) If Christ died for all, then this absurdity would follow, that he died for those whom he knew to be children of wrath and sons of perdition, whom God had passed by, and left to perish eternally in that miserable condition into which they had plunged themselves by sin.

(3.) If Christ died for all men, then he died for those who are now roaring in hell, and scorched and tormented with unquenchable fire, without any hope of redemption; and so he bare the punishment of their sins, and they are also now bearing and shall bear it for ever themselves.

(4.) If Christ died with an intention to save all men, then he is an imperfect and incomplete Saviour, who hath satisfied offended justice for their sins, and purchased redemption by his blood, but cannot apply it. He is only a true Saviour of those who are actually saved, and obtain salvation by him.

(5.) If Christ died for all men, then he died in vain for the most part, and his death and sacrifice had little effect; for the generality of men and women will perish eternally. There are many nations in the world that never heard of Christ; and even where the gospel is preached, our Saviour tells us, that 'wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many go in thereat; but that strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it, Mat. 7:12, 13. 'Many are called, but few are chosen.' So that Christ did not offer up the sacrifice of himself for every one in particular.

4. Christ died for the elect, and for all the elect, and none else. God designed to save some of the lost posterity of Adam, for the manifestation of the glory of the exceeding riches of his grace; and Christ died for all these, Eph. 1:4, 5, 6, Compare the following scriptures, Acts 13:48. Rom. 4:25 and 5:8. 1 Cor. 15:3, 4. 1 Pet. 2:21, 24. &c. from which we may be fully convinced that Christ died only for the elect.

Fifthly, I come now to shew, for what ends Christ offered up himself a sacrifice. It was to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God. The grand design and intendment of this oblation was to stone, pacify, and reconcile God, by giving him a full and adequate satisfaction for the sins of the elect world. So the apostle teaches us, Col. 1:20. 'Having made peace by the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself.' 2 Cor. 5:19. 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,' &c. Reconciliation is the making up of that breach which sin had made between God and us, and restoring us again to the forfeited favour and friendship of Heaven. This was the design and intendment of Christ's sacrifice, Eph. 2:16. Now, Christ's sacrifice, abundantly satisfied these ends. And therefore I proceed,

Sixthly, To prove that Christ gave full satisfaction to the justice of God for the sins of all the elect. This is clear and evident,

1. From many texts of scripture which merit your perusal, as Eph. 5:2. Heb. 7:26, 27. 10:14 and 9:13, 14.

2. Christ's resurrection from the dead proves the validity and completeness of his satisfaction. As the elect's Surety, he satisfied the law in his death; and having thereby paid all their debt, he received an acquittance, and the discharge was solemnly published to the world in his resurrection. He was released from the grave, as from prison, by a public sentence; which is an undeniable argument of the validity of the payment made by him in our name. For being under such strong bands as the justice and power of God, God could never have loosed the pains of death, if his sufferings had not been fully satisfactory to God, and received and accepted by him for our discharge. And it is observable to this purpose, that the raising of Christ is ascribed to God as reconciled, Heb. 13:20. The divine power was not put forth in loosing the bands of death till God was pacified. Justice incensed exposed him to death, and justice appeased raised him from the dead. If he had not paid all his people's debt by sacrifice, he had been detained a prisoner for ever in the grave. But God having received full satisfaction, set him free.

3. His ascension into heaven proves the completeness and all-sufficiency of his sacrifice. If he had been excluded from the divine presence, there had been just cause to suspect, that anger had been still resting in the breast of God; but his admission into heaven is an infallible testimony that God is reconciled. Our Saviour produces this as the convincing argument by which the Holy Ghost will effectually overcome the guilty fears of men, John 16:10. 'He will convince the world of righteousness, because I go to my Father.' Christ in his sufferings was numbered among transgressors; he died as a guilty person; but having overcome death, and returned to his Father again, he made the innocency of his person manifest and apparent, and shewed that a complete righteousness is acquired by his sufferings, sufficient to justify all those who shall truly accept of it.

4. The many excellent benefits which God reconciled bestows upon his people, prove the completeness of Christ's satisfaction.

(1.) Justification is a fruit of Christ's death; for the obligation of the law is

made void by it, whereby the sinner was bound over to eternal wrath and punishment; Col. 2:14. 'Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, 'nailing it to his cross.' The terms are here used which are proper to the cancelling of a civil bond. The killing letter of the law is abolished by the blood of the cross; the nails and the spear, which pierced his sacred body, have rent it in pieces, to intimate that its condemning power is taken away. The forgiveness of sin is the chief part of our redemption, and it is ascribed to Christ's blood as the procuring cause of it, Eph. 1:7. 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.' The payment made by the Surety is a discharge of the principal debtor from the pursuit of the creditor. As Christ took away the curse from his people, being made a curse for them; so he takes away sin from his people, being made sin for them.

(2.) The death of Christ procured grace and holiness for men. We made a forfeiture of our original righteousness and sanctity, and were justly deprived of it; and till once divine justice was appeased, all influences of grace were suspended. Now, the sacrifice of Christ opened heaven, and brought down the Spirit, who is the principal and efficient cause of sanctification in men. The whole world lay in wickedness, as a dead carcase in the grave, entirely insensible of its horror and corruption. But the Holy Spirit inspired it with new life, and by a marvellous change hath caused purity to succeed corruption. It had been a great favour indeed to be delivered from the guilt of sin, that bound us over to everlasting wrath and punishment; but it had not been a perfect and complete favour, without our being delivered from the venom and filth of sin, which had infected and corrupted our whole nature. If our guilt were only removed, we had been freed from punishment; but without the restoration of the divine image we had not been qualified for heaven, and fitted for converse with God. It was necessary that our souls should be washed, and our faculties renewed, to put us in a capacity to serve God and enjoy communion with him. And this is only obtained by Christ's death, Tit. 2:14.

(3.) The receiving believers into heaven is a convincing proof of the all-sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. The gates of the New Jerusalem were fast

shut against sinful man, when he fell from his primitive holiness and felicity. God banished him from his presence, and drove him out of paradise, his native seat, fencing it with cherubims to prevent his re-entry. But Christ hath set open these everlasting doors, that believers may enter freely in, Heb. 10:19, 20. This shews the validity of his satisfaction. For divine justice will not permit that glory and immortality, which are the privileges of innocency and righteousness, should be given to guilty and polluted criminals; and therefore it was Christ's first and greatest work to remove the bar that excluded men from the sanctuary of felicity. Now, what stronger argument can there be, that God is infinitely pleased with what Christ has done and suffered for his people, than the taking of them into his presence to behold his glory? The apostle sets down this order in the work of our redemption, Heb. 5:9 that 'Christ being made perfect through sufferings, became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.' In short, it is observable, that the scripture attributes to the death of Christ, not only justification, whereby we are redeemed from wrath and misery, that dreadful punishment which we deserved for sin, but such an abundant merit also, which purchases adoption for us, and all the glorious privileges of the sons of God.

From all which it is evident, that the sacrifice of Christ answered all the ends for which it was designed. It gave full satisfaction to the justice of God, and made up an everlasting peace between God and sinners.

Quest. What was it that rendered Christ's sacrifice so acceptable to God, and so efficacious for men?

Ans. 1. The quality of his person derived an infinite value to his obedience and sufferings. He was equally God, and as truly infinite in his perfections as the Father who was provoked by our sins. He was the eternal Son of God, equal with the Father in all things. The fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in him; and he is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. His person was of as great dignity and honour as the Father's was, to whom he was offered. Though there be a distinction of order among the persons of the Godhead, yet there is no priority, nor distinction of dignity. This made his sufferings of infinite and eternal value. For though his Deity was impassable, yet he that was a divine person suffered. And it is especially to be observed, that

the efficacy of his blood is ascribed to the divine nature. So the apostle declareth, Col. 1:14. 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin.' The efficacy of the Deity mingled itself with every groan in his agony, and with every pang and cry upon the cross. And as his blood was the blood of God, as it is called, Acts 20:28 so his groans were the groans of God, and his cries the cries of God, and therefore of infinite value. What he acted and suffered as man, was dignified and rendered efficacious by his divine nature. From this arises the infinite difference between the sacrifices of the law, and the sacrifice of Christ, both in virtue and value. This is set down by the apostle with admirable emphasis, Heb. 9:13, 14. 'For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God; by the personal union with the Deity, great dignity was conferred upon the sufferings of the human nature.

2. The virtue and efficacy of Christ's sacrifice flowed from the infinite holiness and purity of his person. He was holy, harmless, &c. He was as free from blemish, as he was full of the Spirit. The spotlessness of his human nature was necessary to his being a sacrifice, and the union of the divine nature was necessary to his being a valuable sacrifice. He had no sin naturally imputed, and he had no sin personally inherent. He had no sin naturally imputed, because he was not descended from Adam by ordinary generation, who introduced sin into the world, and derived it down to all his progeny. He was holy in all his offices, harmless as a priest, faithful as a prophet, holy in his life and death; no guile was found in his mouth, nor any inordinate motions and desires in his heart. His sacrifice could not have availed us, if he had been tainted with the least sin.

3. The graces exercised in his sufferings rendered his sacrifice fragrant and acceptable to God, Phil. 2:8. 'He became obedient unto death.' His obedience ran with a cheerful and prevalent strain through the whole course of his life. He submitted to a body, fitted to receive all those strokes of wrath that we should have endured for ever; a body made

under the law, subject to the obedience and malediction of it. He delighted to do the will of God in human nature, Psal. 40:6, 7. He came not to do his own will, but that of him who sent him. Whatever was ordered him by his Father, that he spake, did, and suffered. He cheerfully laid down his life when the hour appointed by the Father was come. It was not a simple, but an affectionate obedience: 'As the Father gave me commandment, (says he), so I do,' John 14:31. His offering himself a sacrifice according to the will of God for our sanctification, was the most significant part of his obedience. This rendered his sacrifice highly acceptable. Again, his admirable humility is joined with his obedience, as the cause of his exaltation, which was an evidence of its fragrancy, Phil. 2:8. That the Lord of glory should stoop so low as to put himself in the room of sinners, eclipsing the bright lustre and splendour of his glory, and shrouding under the disguise of our infirm flesh, submitting himself to a harder piece of service, and to deeper degrees of humiliation, than ever any creature in heaven or earth was capable of; to descend from the throne of his inaccessible light, and to expose himself to the rage and fury of devils and men, without murmuring or impatience, to submit himself to an infamous death, endure the wrath of an offended God and Father, whom he infinitely loved, shed his precious blood, and descend into the grave; this was an inexpressible and inimitable act of humility, lower than which he could not stoop. Now, since humility renders men so pleasing to God, that he heaps upon them the greatest testimonies of his favours, and richly dispensed to them the gifts of his grace, it must needs render the Son most acceptable to the Father in these his sufferings, and draw from him the greatest testimonies and distributions of his favours, because it was the greatest act of humility, as well as of obedience, that could possibly be performed. Further, the high exercise of his faith, rendered his sacrifice most acceptable to God. He had not one spark of infidelity, nor any the least grain of distrust in the goodness of God, in the midst of his deepest sorrows. He suffered the torments of hell for a time, without that killing despair that preys upon the inhabitants of that dismal place. He had a working of faith under the sense of his Father's greatest displeasure and confidence in his love, while he felt the outward and inward force of his frowns. He had a faith of the acceptableness of his death for all his people, and gave clear evidence of his confidence in the promise, for a happy and glorious success, in his acting like a king, while

he was hanging as a malefactor upon the cross, distributing his largesses to the poor thief, assuring him that on that very day he should be with him in paradise. Both his obedience to God in not turning his back, and his trust in God for his help and assistance, are joined together as the ground of his justification, Isa. 50:5, 7, 8. The light of his faith was to be discovered in opposition to Adam's unbelief, and his great humility in opposition to Adam's pride. By his active and passive obedience, he glorified the holiness and justice of God; by his humility, the power and sovereignty of God; and by his trust and confidence, the divine faithfulness and veracity. All which must needs render his sacrifice a sweet smelling savour to God, and efficacious for men.

4. The completeness of Christ's satisfaction is grounded on the degrees of his sufferings. There was no defect in that payment which he made. We owed a debt of blood to the law of God, and his life was offered up as a sacrifice, otherwise the law had remained in its full force and vigour, and justice had continued unsatisfied. That a divine person hath suffered the punishment that we deserved, is properly the reason of our redemption; as it is not the quality of the surety that releases the debtor out of prison, but the payment which he makes in his name. The blood of Christ shed, and offered up to God, ratifies the New Testament. In short, our Saviour, in his death, suffered the malediction of the law, even all those degrees of divine wrath and vengeance which the elect should have suffered for ever in hell; and his divine nature gave a full value, and put a high price upon the sufferings of his human nature; so that the satisfaction proceeding from them had an intrinsic worth and value; and God, who was infinitely provoked, is thereby infinitely pleased.

5. The sacrifice of Christ was fragrant and efficacious, because of the great glory and honour which he thereby brought unto God. The glory of his Father was what he had in view, as his main scope and aim in all his actions and sufferings, and that which he also actually perfected. The glory of all the divine attributes appeared in him in its highest lustre, 2 Cor. 4:6. They all centered in him, and shone forth in their greatest splendor, not only in his incarnation, but also and chiefly in his sacrifice. The mercy and justice of God appear in combination here, and set off one another's lustre. Mercy could not be glorified, unless justice had been

satisfied; and justice had not been evidently discovered, if the tokens of divine wrath had not been seen upon Christ. Grace had never sailed to us, but in the streams of the Mediator's blood. 'Without the shedding of blood (says the apostle) there is no remission.' Divine justice had not been so fully known in the eternal groans and shrieks of a world of guilty creatures, nor could sin have appeared so odious to the holiness of God by eternal scars upon devils and men, as by a deluge of blood from the heart of this sacrifice. Without the sufferings of Christ, the glory of the divine perfections had lain in the cabinet of the divine nature without the discovery of their full beams. And though they were active in the designing of it, yet they had not been declared to men or angels, without the bringing of Christ to the altar. By the stroke upon his soul, all the glories of God flashed out to the view of the creature. All the divine perfections were glorified in the sufferings of Christ; his mercy, justice, power, and wisdom. Here the unsearchable depths of manifold wisdom were unfolded. Such a wisdom of God shined in the cross, as the angels never beheld in his face upon his throne; wisdom to cure a desperate disease, by the death of the physician; to turn the greatest evil to the greatest good; to bring forth mercy by the execution of justice, and the shedding of blood: how surprising and astonishing is this! The ultimate end and design of Christ's sacrifice was the honour of God in our redemption. Christ sought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him, John 8:50. He sought the glory of his Father in the salvation of men. Now, that must needs be fragrant and acceptable to God which accomplished the triumph of all his attributes.

Quest. But did not those sacrifices which were in use under the law satisfy the justice of God, and take away the sins of the people?

To this I answer in the negative. These sacrifices were but shadows by their institution, and were to have their accomplishment in some other, and therefore could make nothing perfect. See what the apostle Paul saith, who was once very zealous for them, Heb. 10:1, 4, 11. 'For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never, with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. And every priest

standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.' More particularly,

1. It was against common reason, that the sin of a soul should be expiated by the blood of a beast; that the sufferings of a nature so far inferior could be a sufficient compensation for the crime of a nature so much superior to it. The prophet spake the true reason of mankind when he asserted, that the Lord would not be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil; that he would not accept of the first-born of the body as a satisfaction for the sin of the soul, Micah 6:6. A rational sacrifice was only fit to atone for the sin of a rational being. There was no agreement between the nature of a man and that of a bullock. The nature that sinned was also to suffer, and so to bear the punishment due by the law. 'The soul that sinneth it shall die,' saith the Lord, Ezek. 18:4. If God had been content with the blood of beasts for the sins of men, then there had been no sufficient discovery of the severity of his justice, the purity of his holiness, nor the grandeur of his grace. It was inconsistent with the honour and majesty of God, who had denounced a terrible curse upon all the transgressors of the law, and published it with so much dread and awful solemnity, as thunders and lightnings, fire and smoke, and terrible earthquakes, to make so light of it, as to accept of the blood of a few mangled beasts, in the room of the offender. Would God appear upon mount Sinai with ten thousands of his angels to publish a fiery law, and let all the threatenings of it vanish into smoke? Can any in reason think, that all those fearful curses should be poured out upon a few irrational and innocent creatures, who had never broken that law? Can it ever enter into the heart of man to think, that, after so solemn and terrible a proclamation, he would acquiesce in so slight a compensation as the death of a poor beast? None can possibly entertain so mean and despicable thoughts of the infinite majesty, justice and holiness of God, or of the vile and detestable nature of sin, and the greatness of its provocation, as to imagine that the one could be contented, or the other expiated, by the blood of a lamb or a bullock. Our own consciences will tell us, that if God will have a sacrifice, it must be proportioned to the majesty of him whom they have offended, and to the greatness of the crime which they have committed. If all the cattle upon a thousand hills were sacrificed, and all the cedars in Lebanon were cut down for wood to

burn the offering, it could not be a sweet smelling savour to God. There is an infinite disproportion between this kind of sacrifice and the glorious Majesty of Heaven.

2. The repetition of those sacrifices shews their insufficiency for the expiation of sin. For where the conscience is once purged, and the remission of sin obtained, there is no more offering for sin, as the apostle tells us, Heb. 10:18. But the repeating of the sacrifice plainly intimates, that the person for whose sake it is repeated is in the same condition now that he was in at the time of the former oblation. The apostle tells us, that if the law could have made men perfect, then these sacrifices would have ceased to be offered, because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins, but in those sacrifices there was a remembrance again made of sins every year, Heb. 10:2, 3. Had the wrath of God been appeased by them, why should the fire burn perpetually upon the altar? why should it be so fed continually with the carcasses of slain beasts? As often as they were offered, there was a conscience of sin excited in the presenter of them, and iniquity was called to remembrance. The whole scene of the legal administration loudly proclaimed, that the wrath of God against sin was not appeased and that the guilt of the soul was not wiped off. If a man had presented a sacrifice for his sin one day, and fallen into the same or some other sin before night, he must have repeated his sacrifice for a new expiation. Had there been any efficacy in them to purge away sin, then they had ceased; and there would have been no repetition of them.

3. The great variety of these sacrifices shews their insufficiency to take away sin. There were many gifts and sacrifices, bulls and goats, calves and lambs; which shews that no one thing was fit to typify and represent the full expiation wrought by Christ; whereas he offered but one sacrifice, and by that perfected for ever them that are sanctified. As the application of many medicines shews their insufficiency to cure a disease, so the many sacrifices and purifications under the law, plainly evidence that a full and efficacious propitiation for sin was to be sought elsewhere. If the great annual sacrifice, which was the most solemn one in that whole institution could not effect it, much less could sacrifices of a lower dignity. It is from the repetition of this great sacrifice that the apostle

argues the insufficiency of them all, Heb. 10.

4. God never intended that these sacrifices should expiate sin by any virtue of their own. The great and glorious Majesty of heaven, who was offended and provoked by sin, is truly infinite; and to satisfy him the sacrifices must be infinite too. But none of those sacrifices under the law were so. Why then were they appointed? Not with any intention to purge away the sin of the soul, but the ceremonial uncleanness of the flesh, as Heb. 9:13, 14 where you see the blood of bulls and of goats sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh. The apostle compares these and the sacrifice of Christ together, and shews that the one purified only the flesh, and the other the conscience. It was not a moral guilt which they were intended to remove, but only a ceremonial one; as when one was defiled by touching a dead carcase or a leprous person, which was reckoned a defilement of the body, not of the soul. God hath often discovered their weakness and insufficiency, and that they could not give him recompense for the injury done him by sin. So Isa. 66:1. 'Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?' By the house or temple here is meant all the Jewish economy, the whole lump of legal sacrifices. Though all these were appointed by God, and had been used by his people for a long time, yet he had no rest in them: they could neither satisfy his justice nor vindicate the honour of his law, nor could they ever take away sin, Heb. 10:11. And therefore God rejected them, and they were abolished and disannulled, for the weakness and unprofitableness of them, Heb. 7:18. Though they had been practised by the Jews for so many ages, yet not one sin had been expiated by them in all that long tract of time.

5. The insufficiency of these sacrifices for the satisfaction of divine justice, and the expiation of sin, appears from the end and design of their institution, which was to prefigure and represent a more excellent sacrifice, that was able to do it effectually, even the great sacrifice of Christ. They were but shadows of good things to come, as the apostle terms them, and did typically represent a crucified dying Christ as the substance: and whatever virtue they had, it was not in or from themselves, but from their typical relation to him whom they prefigured.

They all pointed forth the sacrifice of Christ, by whose precious blood, shed in the fulness of time, the sins of the elect were fully expiated. God had no pleasure in these sacrifices, but only so far as they represented the sacrifice of Christ, which effectually takes away sin, Heb. 10:6, 7, 8.

From what hath been said on this head, you see that those sacrifices which were in use under the law could not satisfy the justice of God, and take away the sins of men.

Object. If Christ suffered for the sins of his people, then he that was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, must be accounted a guilty person, yea, even the most guilty of all others, as having charged upon him all the sins of an elect world.

Ans. There is a twofold guilt to be considered, namely, a culpable, and a penal guilt. He that commits the offence is under culpable guilt; and he who is obliged to suffer for the offence is under penal guilt, though he did not actually commit it. Now, Christ as our sacrifice was under this penal guilt; the offences committed by us were charged upon him; and by his voluntary undertaking to be a sacrifice for us, he came under an obligation to suffer for us, as if he had really sinned, though we only were the transgressors. This is plain in the case of those legal sacrifices, which were shadows of Christ. It appears from them, that these two sorts of guilt may be separated, so that he who is not culpably guilty may be penally guilty, and may justly suffer though he did not personally sin: for the sins of the people being laid upon these sacrifices, they were under penal guilt, and did justly suffer as if they had sinned; and yet they were not culpably guilty; for they neither had sinned, nor were they capable of sinning.

Quest. Seeing Christ offered up his sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and he himself is God, how could he die and make satisfaction to himself?

Ans. 1. God cannot be said properly to satisfy himself; for that would be the same thing as to pardon sin simply, without any satisfaction.

2. There is a twofold consideration of Christ, one in respect of his divine nature or essence, in which sense he is both the object against which the

offence is committed, and to whom for it the satisfaction is made: and there is another consideration of Christ in respect of his person, and economy or office; in which sense he properly satisfied God, seeing he was, in respect of his manhood, another and inferior to God. So he says, John 14:28. 'My Father is greater than I.' The blood of the man Christ Jesus is the matter of the satisfaction; the divine nature dignifies it, and makes it of infinite value.

3. It is not inconsistent with reason, that the Son of God, clothed in our nature, should by his death make satisfaction to the Deity, and consequently to himself. For in the according of two different parties, a person that belongs to one of them may interpose for reconciliation, provided that he divests his own interest, and leaves it with the party from which he comes. As for instance, let us suppose two persons, a father and a son, both possessed of the supreme power, and offended by rebellious subjects: It is not inconsistent that the Son interpose as a Mediator to restore them to the favour of the prince his father. And by this he also reconciles them to himself, and procures pardon for that offence, by which his own majesty was wronged. Now, this is a fit illustration of the great work of our redemption, so far as human things can represent divine. For all the persons of the holy Trinity were equally provoked by our sin; and to obtain our pardon, the Son, with the consent of the Father, deposits his interests in his hands, and as a Mediator intervenes between us and his Father, who in this transaction is considered as the guardian of the rights of Heaven; and having performed what divine justice required, he reconciled the world to God, i. e. to the Father, himself, and the eternal Spirit. In this case his person is the same, but his quality is different. He made satisfaction as a Mediator, and received it as God; which is no way inconsistent.

Quest. Seeing Christ really suffered for the sins of his people, whether did he suffer the same punishment that they deserved, and which the law threatened, or only something equivalent to it? It would seem that Christ did not suffer the same thing that the law threatened, and which we justly deserved for sin: for then he must have suffered eternal death. It was not only the first, but the second death that the law threatened. Therefore Christ's temporal death did not satisfy the law and justice of God for us.

There are very learned and pious writers on both sides of this question. Yet I humbly think, that, without any inconvenience, both may be affirmed in different respects. To clear this, you would know, that the punishment which Christ endured in our stead may be considered either as to its substance or essence, or with respect to the accidental circumstances which attend it when inflicted on the damned. Now, if we consider it as to substance or essence, it was the very same which the sinner should have undergone. Man by his fall was liable to death, and to the curse and wrath of God, and Christ hath borne this in the elect's room. But if we consider it with respect to the accidental circumstances which attend it when it is inflicted on the damned, then it was not the very same, but a punishment equivalent to it. The accidental circumstances of this punishment as inflicted on the damned, are, blasphemy, rage, and an impotent fierceness of mind, which are not appointed by the law, but are only accidentals, arising from the wickedness and perverseness of their spirits. Now, our blessed Saviour was not, nor possibly could be, liable to these. The great holiness and sanctity of his person effectually secured him against all these. Besides, the punishment that is inflicted upon the damned is eternal, and attended with final despair, and the intolerable anguish of a guilty stinging conscience. This is the never-dying worm that gnaws upon their vitals. But Christ the Redeemer having no real guilt, was not liable to the worm of conscience; and his temporary sufferings were equivalent to the eternal punishment of the damned, and fully satisfactory to divine justice, on account of the infinite dignity and excellency of his person; so that he was not capable of despair.

Thus it evidently appears, that Christ offered himself a sacrifice to satisfy the justice of God offended by sin. And in order to confirm your faith in this important article, one of the fundamental doctrines of our holy religion, let me again call your attention to the following particulars, which I shall but barely mention.

1. Consider the necessity of this satisfaction. Without shedding of blood there is no remission, The justice of God, the nature of sin, and the sanction of the law necessarily required it. And the event manifests it; for it is not conceivable, how, if sin could have been taken away, with a bare

word, the Lord would have fetched a compass by the blood of his own Son.

2. Consider the truth of it. Christ did really and truly, by the sacrifice of himself, satisfy the justice of God for us. For he bare the punishment due to our sins, Isa. 53:5. He died for us, in our room and stead, Rom. 5:6, 7.; and not for our good only, which may be said of all the martyrs. Compare 1 Cor. 1:13. He bought us with his blood and gave himself a ransom for our souls, and so has taken away our sins in the guilt thereof. His sufferings were the sufferings of a divine person; and so, though not infinite in duration, yet infinite in value. He was Lord of his own life.

3. Consider the perfection of it. He satisfied completely for the sins of the people. His satisfaction fully answered the demands of the justice and law of God. This is plain from the excellency of the person suffering, Col 1:19.: this the apostle testifies, Heb. 10:14 forecited; and from the discharge he got in his resurrection, and exaltation to the Father's right hand. Whatever is left to his people to suffer it is not to satisfy the justice of God, but for their correction, that they be made partakers of his holiness.

Having thus shewed that one end for which Christ offered up himself a sacrifice to God, was to satisfy his justice, I proceed,

SECONDLY, To shew that another end, as a native consequence of the other, was to reconcile elect sinners unto God. Here I shall,

1. Explain the nature of Christ's reconciliation.
2. Prove that reconciliation with God is the blessed fruit and effect of Christ's death.
2. Shew what influence the death of Christ has on this.

First, As to the nature of reconciliation, several things are implied in it. As,

1. A former friendship and favour. God and man were once in good terms. There was a time wherein they met and lovingly conversed together. When Adam dropt from the fingers of his Creator, he was the friend and

favourite of Heaven. He had the law of God written on his heart, and a strong bent and inclination in his will to obey it. In that state there was no place for reconciliation: for then there was no breach between God and his creature.

2. It implies an enmity between God and man. Man fell from his primitive state of favour and friendship with Heaven, and joined issue with the devil, God's greatest enemy. Whereupon the Lord took the forfeiture of his possession, turned him out of paradise, and hindered his re-entrance by a flaming sword. There is now a dreadful war betwixt earth and heaven. Men daily rebel against God's laws, labouring to beat down his interest in the world, and employing all their powers and faculties, mercies and comforts, as weapons of unrighteousness to fight against him. And he is all enemy to them; for he hates all the workers of iniquity, and the foolish cannot stand in his sight. His wisdom, holiness, justice, and power, stand ready charged against them, and they are liable to his eternal vengeance. This is the state wherein man stands with God on the account of sin.

3. Reconciliation with God lies in his receiving rebels into favour, and issuing forth a gracious act of indemnity for all their sins, and cancelling all those bands of guilt whereby they were bound over to eternal wrath and misery. This great blessing formally consists in his 'not imputing their trespasses unto them;' 2 Cor. 5:19. The forfeiture is taken off, and they are admitted into his former friendship and favour. Now, this is twofold; fundamental and actual.—There was a foundation laid for this reconciliation in the death of Christ. This is the mean by which it was purchased, and the chief and only ground why God lays aside his anger. 'He made peace,' says the apostle, 'by the blood of his cross.' And it is actual, when the offer of reconciliation is complied with by faith. He sends forth his ambassadors, clothed with his authority, to pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, declaring his great willingness to receive them into favour; and when men embrace the offer of reconciliation, then God actually lays aside his anger, and imputes sin no more to them.

Secondly, I proceed to prove that it is only through Christ that sinners can obtain reconciliation with God. This is clear,

1. From the holy scriptures, where this great truth is expressly declared. So it is said, Acts 4:12. 'Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.' And we are elsewhere told, that 'there is but one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. And he is called the Saviour of the world, not only by way of excellency, in respect of the great danger he saves us from, but by way of exclusion also, in regard of the sole designation of his person to this office, exclusive of all others. 'If ye believe not that I am he,' says he, 'ye shall die in your sins,' John 8:24. He is the only person that was designed in all the prophecies, promises, and types. He is the only Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He is the promised seed of the woman, that was to break the serpent's head. The heart of God is fixed upon him alone, and his resolution concerning the duration of his office is immutable and unalterable. He hath summed up all the dispensations of former ages in him, Eph. 1:10. All other things were preparations to and shadows of him; God, who had various ways of communicating himself to men, hath summed up his whole will in his Son, and manifested and declared that all his transactions with men did terminate in him.

2. The truth of this doctrine will appear, that none else was ever fitted for the management of this work. God and men were to be reconciled, and none but he that was God and man in one person could be a fit day's man to lay his hand upon both. Had he been only man, he had been incapable to satisfy offended justice; and had he been only God, he had been incapable of suffering. But being God and man, he is fitted for both. Infinite satisfaction was requisite to appease the anger of God; for without this, guilt would have remained: and none else was capable to give it, but Christ, in regard of the infinite dignity and excellency of his person. It was upon no other person that the Spirit descended like a dove to furnish his human nature with all needful abilities for the discharge of his trust.

3. If we consider that none else ever did that for us which was necessary for our reconciliation with God. It was he that answered the demands of the law, and silenced the roaring of vindictive justice. He only filled up the gap that was between God and sinners. It was only Christ that

interposed himself as a shelter between the wrath of God and the souls of men. The prophet Isaiah tells us, that 'he bare our griefs, and carried our sorrows, and that the chastisement of our peace was upon him.' He received into his own bowels the sword of justice that was sharpened and pointed for us. He tread the wine-press alone, and none of the people were with him. He endured the bruises of God, the darts of the devil, and the reproaches of men; and would not desist till he had laid the foundation of an everlasting peace between God and sinners.

4. If ye consider that none else was ever accepted of God but this Mediator. The legal sacrifices were not able to make the comers thereunto perfect, Heb. 10:1. They were only shadows of good things to come; Christ was the substance and complement of them all; and they were no farther regarded of God but as they were types and representations of his Son. The daily repetition of them was an undeniable evidence of their inability to effect the reconciliation of man; but the blood of Christ typified by the blood sprinkled by Moses upon the people, does it effectually. This was a sacrifice wherein God smelt a sweet savour, and was highly accepted of him.

Thirdly, It remains to shew you what Christ did in bringing about this reconciliation.

1. He undertook this work in the eternal transaction that was between the Father and him, as I have shown you formerly at large.

2. He purchased reconciliation by his death, and thereby procured the egress of the divine favour to man. This was the prime article in the covenant of grace, 'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed,' Isa. 53:10. God required this sacrifice exclusive of all others, which were entirely useless for the satisfaction of justice, though fit to prefigure the grand sacrifice that God intended. It was by the death of Christ alone that reconciliation was purchased to men, Rom. 5:10. Eph. 2:13 and Col. 1:21. And when he was upon the cross he cried, 'It is finished;' that is, the work of redemption is accomplished, reconciliation is purchased, I have done all that was appointed for me to do, the articles on my part are now fulfilled, there remain no more deaths for me to suffer.

3. He brings about an actual reconciliation between God and sinners by virtue of his efficacious intercession, Heb. 7:25. His advocacy in heaven is the gracious spring of all divine communications. It is by this that he deals with God in the behalf of men; he leads every believer by the hand as it were unto the gracious presence of God, bespeaking acceptance for them after this manner: 'Father, here is a poor creature that was born in sin, and hath lived in rebellion all his days; he hath broken all thy laws, and deserves all thy wrath; yet he is one of that number that thou gavest me before the world began; and I have made full payment to thy justice by my blood for all his debt; and now I have opened his eyes to see the sinfulness and misery of his condition: I have broken his heart for his rebellions against thee and bowed his will into obedience to the offer of thy grace: I have united him to me by faith, as a living member of my mystical body: and now, since he is mine by regeneration, let him also become thine by a special acceptation: since thy justice is satisfied for his sins, let thine anger also be turned away, and receive him graciously into favour.' In a word, the reconciliation of every elect person with God, is actually brought about by Christ: He opens their eyes, and lets them see their sin and danger: he beats down the stubbornness and obstinacy of their wills, and brings up their hearts to a full compliance with the offers of peace made in the gospel; and he leads them to God, and makes their persons and duties acceptable to him. Hence it is said, Eph. 1:6. 'He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.'

Before I proceed to the consideration of the second part of Christ's priestly office, namely, his intercession. I shall make some improvement of the doctrine of his satisfaction.

1. Here we may see the horrid and hateful evil of sin, which no other sacrifice could expiate but the blood of the Son of God. As the strength of a disease is known and seen by the quality and force of the medicine that is made use of to cure it, and the virtue of a commodity by the greatness of the price that it laid down to buy it; so is the matter here. The sufferings and death of Christ express the evil of sin far above the severest judgments that ever were inflicted upon any creature. The dying groans of our blessed Redeemer set forth the horrid nature of sin, and loudly proclaim how hateful it is in the eye of an infinitely pure and holy God.

How much evil must there be in sin that made Christ to groan and bleed to death to take it away! It is strange to imagine how rational agents should dare to commit such an evil, so freely and openly, and that for trifles and perishing vanities, which are of no continuance and duration. Can they escape, or can they possibly endure, the wrath and vengeance of an incensed Deity? If God spared not his own Son, when he came in the likeness of sinful flesh, how shall sinners escape, who are deeply and universally defiled? Can they encounter with the fury of the Almighty, the very apprehensions of which made Christ's soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death? Have they patience to endure and bear that for ever, which was intolerable for Christ to bear but for a few hours, who had all the strength of the Deity to support him? If it was so with the green tree, what shall become of the dry, when exposed to the fiery trial? O what prodigious madness is it for men to drink iniquity like water, as a harmless thing, when it is a poison so dangerous and deadly, that the least drop of it brings certain ruin? What desperate and monstrous folly is it to have slight apprehensions of that which is attended with the first and second death; even with all the terrors and torments of hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; where misery will continue in its full extremity, while eternity runs its endless course! Nothing but unreasonable infidelity and want of thought can make men venturous to provoke the living God, who is infinitely sensible of their sins, and who both can and will most terribly punish them for ever.

2. This lets us see the strictness and inexorable severity of divine justice, that required satisfaction equivalent to the desert of sin. All the other demonstrations of it which God hath given to the world, are nothing to this. God spared not his own Son. The fountain of divine mercy stopt its course, and would not let out one drop to Christ in the day of his extreme sorrow and sufferings. The Father of mercies saw his dear Son sweating great drops of blood in a cold night, and crying out with a mournful accent, 'O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;' and yet he would not grant the request. O the inflexible severity of divine justice! What will ye do, sinners, when it falls upon you in hell? If the blessed Son of God cried so out, what will become of you? How will impenitent sinners roar and yell for ever under the dreadful strokes of incensed justice! O what a dreadful thing must it be to fall into the hands of the

living God!

3. See here the wonderful love of Christ to poor miserable sinners, and his great desire for the salvation of their souls. His love here passeth knowledge. It infinitely transcends the reach of the most illuminated understanding. What Christ suffered from his birth to his death on the accursed tree, affords the most striking instance of his great love to poor sinners. No example of such love can be found among men. This matchless love of Christ should inflame our hearts to sing, as Rev. 1:5, 6. 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'

4. This doctrine affords us the strongest assurance that can be, that God is willing to pardon our sins, and to be reconciled to us. There is in the natural conscience of man, when opened by a piercing conviction, such a quick sense of guilt, and of God's avenging justice, that it can never have an entire confidence in his mercy till justice be atoned. From hence the convinced sinner is restlessly inquisitive how to find out the way of reconciliation with a holy and righteous God. Thus he is represented inquiring by the prophet, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' The scripture tells us, that some consumed their children in the fire, to render their idols propitious to them: but all these means were ineffectual, their most costly sacrifices were only food for the fire; nay, instead of expiating their old sins, they committed new ones by them, and were so far from appeasing, that they inflamed the wrath of God by their cruel oblations. But in the gospel there is the most rational and easy way propounded for the satisfaction of divine justice, and the justification of man. Hence says the apostle, Rom. 10:6, 7, 9. 'The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above); or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in

thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' The apostle here sets forth the care and anxiety of an awakened conscience. He is at a loss to find out a way to escape deserved judgment: for such things as are on the surface of the earth or floating on the waters are within our view, and may easily be obtained; but those which are above our understandings to discover, or our power to obtain, are proverbially said to be in the heavens above, or in the depths beneath; and it is applied here to the different ways of justification by the law and by the gospel. The law propounds life upon an impossible condition. But the gospel clearly reveals to us, that Christ hath performed all that was necessary to our justification, and that by a true faith we shall have an interest in it. Christ's ascension into heaven is a convincing proof, that the propitiation for our sins is perfect; for otherwise he had not been received into God's sanctuary, and admitted into the sacred place. Therefore to be under anxious and perplexing inquiries how we may be justified, is to deny the value of Christ's righteousness, and the truth of his ascension. By virtue of the sacrifice and righteousness of Christ, the soul is not only freed from the fear of God's wrath, but hath a lively hope of his favour and love. This is expressed by the apostle, Heb. 12:23 when he reckons among the privileges of believers, that they are come to God, &c. The apprehensions of God as the righteous Judge of the world, strike the guilty creature with dread and terror; but is sweetened by Christ the Mediator, we may approach unto him with a humble and holy confidence.

5. We must lay hold on this sacrifice, if we would be saved. This is the only sacrifice that satisfied offended justice, and no other could do it. Therefore we must have recourse to this, if we would have peace with God. Under the law the people were to be sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice; and so must we be with the blood of Christ. It is said, Exod. 24:8 that 'Moses took the blood of the covenant, and sprinkled it on the people.' This signified the sprinkling of their consciences with the blood of Christ, and their obtaining redemption, justification, and access to God, through it alone. Hence our Saviour is described by this part of his office, Isa. 52:15. 'He shall sprinkle many nations.' Our guilt cannot but look upon God as a consuming fire, without a propitiatory sacrifice. All our services are lame and defective, impure and imperfect, so that they will rather provoke God's justice, than merit his mercy. We must

therefore have something to put a stop to a just fury, expiate an infinite guilt, and perfume our unsavoury services, and render them acceptable to a holy and righteous God; and that is only the sacrifice of Christ. This is full of all necessary virtue to save us: but the blood of it must be sprinkled upon our souls by faith. Without this we shall remain in our sins, under the wrath of God, and exposed to the sword of divine justice; and our misery will be heightened by our having the offers of Christ and his grace. O! it is a fearful thing for men to have this sacrifice pleading against them, and this precious blood crying for vengeance from heaven upon them; as innocent Abel's blood cried to heaven for vengeance against the unnatural cruelty of his wicked and inhumane brother.

6. Hence see that God will never seek satisfaction for sin from those that are in Christ Jesus. He gave full and complete satisfaction to the law and justice of God for all the wrongs and injuries done thereto by the sins of men, the sufferer being God, and his divine nature stamping an infinite value upon them. Now, if the creditor receives full satisfaction for an offence done, or complete payment of a debt due, by a debtor, from the hands of a surety, neither law nor justice will permit him to ask any further satisfaction or payment from the principal debtor. He can raise no suit or action against the debtor, in regard he has fully satisfied him by the action and deed of his surety. Law and justice are fully satisfied by the obedience and satisfaction of Christ substituting himself in the room of sinners, and making his soul an offering for them, so as they can crave no more: therefore there can be no condemnation to those that are in him, and have taken the benefit of his satisfaction, and present it to God, as theirs, performed in their room and stead. Hence the apostle says, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' O seek to have your station in Christ, and so you shall be placed beyond the reach of condemnation. You may indeed, though in Christ, suffer chastisements and corrections; yet these are the corrections and chastisements of a Father, not of a Judge; and intended for your good, to cause you forsake sin, and enhance the value of the sacrifice of Christ, and not for satisfaction to justice, whose highest demands have been fully satisfied by the Surety in your room.

7. Hence see the certainty of salvation to, and that God will bestow all the

benefits purchased by Christ on, those who believe. Christ has fully satisfied justice for all those whom he represented as a Mediator; so that it has nothing to demand of the Surety, nor of those whose persons he sustained in that undertaking. Hence their salvation is infallibly secured; and justice is bound to accomplish it. Mercy pleads for it; justice fully satisfied cannot dispute the validity of the claim, and cheerfully consents to their acquittal from guilt and condemnation. Thus righteousness and peace kiss each other in the absolution of the guilty sinner that believeth in Jesus.

8. Bless God for the gospel, that discovers unto us this infallible way of being delivered from condemnation and wrath, this sure way to peace and reconciliation with God, this precious balm for a troubled conscience, and this effectual remedy for appeasing an angry God. O prize the gospel, and the precious discoveries thereof, in which all blessings are contained; and accept of a slain Saviour as your only Redeemer from sin and wrath, from hell and condemnation; and glory in his cross, and what he hath done for your redemption and deliverance.

OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION

THE second part of our Lord's priestly office is his interceding for his people, viz. all those for whom he satisfied divine justice. As his intercession is founded upon his making satisfaction to law and justice for their sins, and plainly supposes his having offered himself a sacrifice in their name and stead, so the objects thereof must be the same. As he died only for those for whom he intercedes, so he intercedes for none but such as he shed his precious blood for, as has been shewn in the preceding part of this discourse.

In discoursing further from this point, I shall shew,

1. The different periods of our Lord's intercession.
2. Wherein his intercession consists.
3. The necessity of it.

4. Deduce an inference or two.

First, We may consider the periods of our Lord's intercession. And this may be taken up in a threefold period of time wherein it was made, viz. before his incarnation, during the state of his humiliation, and now in his exalted state.

1. Christ interceded for his church and people before his manifestation in the flesh. Though this office be most eminently performed since the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ, yet it was also effectually performed by him before his assumption of our flesh. He interposed then by virtue of his engagement to make his soul an offering for sin; and he intercedes now by virtue of his actual performance of that engagement. 'As he was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' so by that same reason he was an advocate pleading from the foundation of the world. It was through the merciful interposition of the Son of God, in consequence of the covenant betwixt the Father and him, that deserved vengeance came not upon the world for sin at the first commission of it. We find him in the Old Testament pleading for the church long before he assumed the human nature, Zech. 1:12. and the saints making use of Christ's name in their prayers to God long before he was born, Dan. 9:17. Thus his intercession began in heaven thousands of years before his abode on earth.

2. He interceded for his people in his state of abasement and humiliation, Heb. 1:7. 'In the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications to God with strong cries and tears.' This manner of intercession was suitable and congruous to his abased state. Though he was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; yet his intercession was not less prevalent with God, for 'he was heard in that he feared.' Ye may see with what majesty and authority he prayed on the behalf of all the elect, John 17:24. 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.' Yea, even when he was under the sharpest agonies, when he was bruised by God, and broken by men, groaning under the wrath of the one, and the wrongs of the other, he forgets not to put up petitions for his crucifiers, Luke 23:34. 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they

do.' And many of those who imbrued their hands in his innocent blood, obtained a gracious pardon through his prevalent intercession.

3. He is pleading now for his people in heaven, in his exalted state. When he had offered up himself a sacrifice on the cross, he ascended into the most holy place, and there prosecutes the same suit that he had commenced on the earth. Hence says the apostle, Rom. 8:34. 'It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.'

Secondly, I am to shew wherein Christ's intercession consists.

1. He does not plead for his people in heaven, in such a supplicatory and humble manner as he prayed for them when he was on the earth. He falls not down upon his knees with a deep prostration of soul, lifting up his eyes with tears and strong cries. Such humble prayers and supplications were suited only to the days of his flesh, when he appeared in the form of a servant, and was found in the likeness of man; but they do not become him now in his state of glory, when he is stript of all those natural infirmities and marks of indigence wherewith he was clothed in the world. But, positively,

2. His intercession lies in the following things.

1st, In his appearing in heaven in his people's nature, and on their account. After he had shed his precious blood on the earth for the expiation of their sin, he rose again from the dead, and ascended into heaven as their Advocate and Intercessor, that, by the virtue of his meritorious sacrifice, he might answer all the charges brought in against them, and sue out all the good things that belonged to them, Heb. 9:24. 'Christ is entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.'

2dly, In presenting the memorials of his death and passion as a moving plea on their account. This was typified and prefigured by the high priest's carrying the blood of the sacrifice into the most holy place, and presenting it before the Lord. He was not to go in before the mercy-seat without it; and there was no interceding but by virtue of it. So the whole

power and efficacy of Christ's intercession is founded upon his meritorious sufferings. His soul that was bruised and made an offering for sin, and his body that was wounded and broken upon the cross, are daily presented before God, and will remain in the divine presence for ever, as an eternal memorial of his bloody sufferings. This has a powerful efficacy in prevailing with God. Hence, by an usual figure, an interceding voice is attributed to his blood, Heb. 12:24. 'It speaketh better things than that of Abel.' Christ's blood speaks, though not vocally and with oral expressions, yet powerfully and efficaciously. It speaks in the same manner that Abel's blood did, though not for the same end; this cried for vengeance upon wicked Cain that shed it; but that pleads for mercy and favour to all believing sinners. We have a rare illustration of the efficacious intercession of Christ in heaven, in the famous story of Amyntas, who appeared as an advocate for his brother Æschylus, who was strongly accused, and in great danger of being condemned to die. This Amyntas having performed great services for the state, and merited highly of the commonwealth, in whose service one of his hands was cut off in battle, comes into the court on his brother's behalf, and said nothing, but only lifted up his arm, and shewed them an arm without a hand; which so moved them, that immediately they acquitted his brother. And thus you have Christ represented visionally, Rev. 5:6 as standing between God and us, 'And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders stood a lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.' That is, he was represented as bearing in his glorified body the marks of his death and sacrifice; the wounds which he received for his people's sins on the earth, are as it were still visible and fresh in heaven, as a prevailing argument with the Father to give forth the mercies that he pleads for to them.

3dly, In presenting his will and desire to the Father on their behalf, not in a humble and supplicatory manner, in the way of charity, but by a claim in the way of justice. He now pleads that his people may be put in full possession of all the blessings which were purchased for them by his bloody death. We find him pleading to this purpose immediately before his passion, John 17:24 foretold. He minds the Father as it were of the covenant that was between them both, of his performing the condition

required on his part, and so claims the performance of God's promise as a debt due to his meritorious obedience even unto death. He hath 'made his soul an offering for sin;' and therefore pleads that he may 'see his seed, prolong his days,' and that the pleasure of the Lord may prosper in his hands,' Isa. 53:10, 11.

4thly, In his presenting his people's prayers and petitions unto God and pleading that they may be accepted and granted for his sake. Their prayers and religious performances are both impure and imperfect; but his precious merit, applied by his powerful intercession, purifies and perfects them. This skilful Advocate puts them into form and language suited to the methods of the court of heaven, and by his great interest there procures them a speedy hearing. This was excellently typified by the high priest's going in before the Lord with the blood of the sacrifice, and his hands full of incense. After he had offered the sacrifice, without, he was to take his hands full of those aromatic drugs of which the incense was composed, without the vail, and put them in a censor of gold full of fire, and cover the mercy-seat with the fumes of it. This was a figure of Christ's intercession and offering up his people's sacrifices to God. He is the alone altar upon which our sacrifices must ascend before the Lord with a grateful fume: the incense of his merit must be added to our prayers, to make them ascend before the mercy-seat as a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour. Hence he is represented, Rev. 8:3, as an angel standing at the golden altar which was before the throne, with a golden censor in his hand, offering up the prayers of all the saints, perfuming them with the incense that was given him. By the much incense mentioned here, we are to understand the mighty quantity of merit and the great power of his intercession, which was a sweet savour to all his people's sacrifices, and renders them acceptable to God.

5thly, In his answering all the bills of indictment which are brought in against them. Many times a believer is brought in as an arraigned criminal before the divine tribunal, where Satan appears as the accuser, brings in the charge of sin, pleads the righteousness of the law, solicits for judgment upon his accusations, and for the execution of the curse due to the crime. The justice of God calls for vengeance, and conscience thunders out nothing but hell and wrath. Now, while the believer is in

these dismal circumstances, Christ steps in and answers the charge. He pleads the efficacy of his merit against the greatness of the believing sinner's crimes, and his satisfaction to justice by the death of the cross against all the demands and challenges of the law. And thus the sentence of condemnation due unto the sinner for his sin is averted, and a sentence of absolution is pronounced, upon the merit and plea of this powerful Intercessor. Hence we find the apostle glorying in this, Rom. 8:33, 34. 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.' Satan may accuse believers; but Christ can soon silence him. Thus, when Joshua the high priest stood before the Lord in filthy garments, Satan stood at his right hand to accuse him; but the angel, namely, the angel of the covenant, Jesus Christ, interposed, saying, 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan,' Zech. 3:1, 2. Though their garments be filthy, yet Christ can take them away, and clothe them with change of raiment. Though Satan be always ready to resist them, yet Christ stands always at the right-hand of God in heaven, to plead for them, and silence Satan.

Thirdly, I shall shew some of the grounds or reasons of our High Priest's intercession.

1. Christ intercedes for his people, because he had a commission, a call, and command from the Father, for this purpose. Is. 42:6. 'I the Lord have called thee in righteousness.' So far was our mighty intercessor from engaging in this service as an intruder or usurper, that he entered upon it under the warrant of Heaven's commission. The Lord called him to be a priest. For verily 'he glorified not himself, to be made an High priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee,' Heb. 5:5. And as the Lord called him to be a priest, so to all the acts of the priestly office. He called him to make his soul an offering for sin, to pour out his life unto death, and to shed his blood for the satisfaction of offended justice. In a word, he called him to make intercession for transgressors. For says the Lord, 'I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me.'

2. He intercedes for his people, because they were given him for this end,

John 17:6. 'Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.' The elect that the Father gave to Christ were his own three ways. They were creatures, and therefore their life and being were derived from him. They were criminals, and therefore their life and being were forfeited to him. They were chosen, and therefore their living and being were designed for him. They were given to Christ that the election of grace might not be frustrated, that none of the little ones might perish. Yea they were given him, that the undertaking of Christ might not be fruitless; for they were given him as his seed, in whom he should see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied, and consequently might not spend his strength and shed his blood in vain. Now, because the elect were thus given to Christ, therefore he intercedes for them, John 17:9, 'I pray for them: I pray not for the world but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine.'

3. He intercedes for his people, because it is a special part of his priestly office to do so. As the high priest under the law was not only to slay and offer the sacrifice in the outer part of the tabernacle, on the anniversary day of expiation, but to enter with the fresh blood into the sanctuary, and sprinkle it seven times; and not only so, but was to bring a censor full of burning coals off the altar, with incense in his hands, to be put upon the fire before the Lord within the vail, that so the cloud in the incense might cover the mercy-seat: in like manner, after our great High Priest had offered himself a sacrifice to God in his bloody death, he entered into heaven, not only with his blood, but with the incense of his prayers, as a cloud about the mercy-seat, to preserve by his life the salvation which he had purchased by his death. Hence the apostle assures us, that our salvation depends upon his intercession, and his intercession upon his priesthood, Heb. 7:24, 25. 'This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.'

4. He intercedes for his people, because he was their propitiation; for the efficacy of his plea depends upon the value and virtue of his sacrifice. As the high priest under the law could not enter into the holy of holies, till by the slaying of the sacrifice he had blood to carry with him: so no more could our Priest be admitted to solicit at the throne of grace, till by his

death he had satisfied the tribunal of justice. Thus, because he paid the debt as our Surety, he is fit to plead the payment as our Attorney. What he finished on earth, he continually presents in heaven. By shedding his blood he made expiation, and by presenting it he makes intercession. In the one he prepared the remedy, and in the other he applies it.

5. He intercedes for his people, because his doing so is one of the great ends of his ascension and session at the right hand of God. In his incarnation he came down from the Father to acquaint us with his gracious purposes, and how far he had agreed with God in our behalf; and at his ascension he went from us to the Father, to sue out the benefits which he had so dearly purchased. He drew up an answer upon the cross to the bill that sin, by virtue of the law, had drawn against us, and ascended to heaven as an Advocate to plead that answer upon his throne, and to rejoin to all the replies against it. And therefore the apostle tells us, that he is 'entered into heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us,' Heb. 9:24.

6. He intercedes for his people, because of that matchless and amazing love which he bears to them. He loves them with a love infinitely transcending the reach of human or angelic conception; he loves them with a love that knows neither height nor depth, breadth nor length, but is absolutely incomprehensible. His love to them brought him down from heaven, and made him willingly undergo all those sorrows and sufferings, which like impetuous torrents poured in upon him. And certainly, seeing in his love and in his pity he purchased eternal redemption for them, he will never cease to plead for the application of it to them. Seeing in such plentiful streams he shed his precious blood to save them, it is not to be imagined that he will spare his prayers for them.

7. He intercedes for his people, because this service of love is that wherein he takes the greatest delight and pleasure. Before time existed, his delights were with the sons of men; and when the fulness of time did dawn, he said, 'Lo, I come,' &c. He had a delight to live with the sons of men, and to die for them. And no sooner does he enter heaven after his death and resurrection, but there he delights to act on their account, to plead their cause, and to intercede for all the blessings of his purchase to them. This is the will of the Father, and he delights to do it.

I conclude all with an inference or two.

1. How wonderful is the love of God in appointing an Intercessor for us, not an angel, but his own beloved Son! Were we left to ourselves, and to our own pleas, our least sins would ruin us, and all the grounds of intercession we could plead upon would be rejected, as unworthy of acceptance before the throne of God.

2. How wonderful is the love of our Redeemer, in condescending to act so friendly a part to us, notwithstanding all our unworthiness and foul miscarriages against him! How should it fill our hearts with wonder, that he who is our Judge, should take upon him to manage our cause in the court of heaven; that he who has a mouth to condemn us, and wrath to consume us for our sins, should bind the arms of his wrath, and employ his tongue to solicit our cause in the court of heaven; that he who has a mouth to condemn us, and wrath to consume us for our sins, should bind the arms of his wrath, and employ his tongue to solicit our cause and procure us the richest blessings!

3. Then true believers have a friend in the court of heaven, who is agenting their cause, managing their concerns, and will make all things work together for their good. Whatever their cause be, and however fearful they may be about the issue of it, all shall go right at length, through the interest of their mighty Intercessor.

4. Believers cannot finally miscarry, and utterly fall away: for they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Their Redeemer ever liveth to make intercession for them. So that neither their own sins, nor all the temptations of Satan, nor the frowns or allurements of the world, shall ever prevail to make them fall from their steadfastness, or from the favour of God: for Christ, as their High Priest, hath died for their sins, and will never intermit his suits to God in their behalf till they be safely brought to glory.

5. Lastly, Employ the Lord Jesus Christ as your High Priest, to bring you to God, depending on his merit as the ground of the expiation of your guilt, and giving you a title unto eternal life. And make use of him as your

Advocate with the Father, to procure you all the blessings you stand in need of for time and eternity.

OF CHRIST'S KINGLY OFFICE

PSALM 2:6.—Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.

THE New Testament leaves us no ground to doubt of our Lord Jesus Christ being the person here spoken of, as several passages in this psalm are expressly therein applied to him. The words contain a direct assertion of Christ's being appointed King of Zion, his spiritual kingdom—Therein we have,

1. His office: He is a King, invested with all regal power and princely authority: being 'King of kings, and Lord of lords;' yea 'the Prince of the kings of the earth.' And this name he hath written on his vesture and on his thigh, Rev. 19:16.
2. His kingdom, over which he rules, the holy hill of Zion; which was an eminent type of the gospel-church, and is called holy, because the temple, the house of God was built upon it.
3. His right to this kingdom; I have sent him my King, says Jehovah. The Father hath placed him in that office, giving him, as God-man, Mediator, 'all power in heaven and in earth.' He is 'given to be Head over all things to the church.'
4. The stability of this kingdom against all attempts made to oppose or destroy it, Yet have I set my King, &c.—Though enemies roar and rage, and leave no means unessayed to hinder the erection and establishment thereof; yet all their plots shall be unsuccessful, and all their deliberations shall miscarry. I have set him as King, and will maintain his throne.

The doctrinal proposition arising from the words is,

DOCT. 'Christ executes the Office of a King.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. That Christ is a King.

II. What sort of a kingdom the kingdom of Christ is.

III. The acts of his kingly office.

IV. The properties of this King.

V. Lastly, Deduce some inferences for application.

I. I am to shew that our Lord Jesus Christ is a King. This will appear, if ye consider,

1. That he was prophesied of in the Old Testament under this character. Thus old Jacob on his death-bed says of him, Gen. 49:10. 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come.' And says the evangelical prophet, Isa. 11:1, 2, 3. 'There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord: and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears.'

2. That he was of old promised to his people under this notion: Isa. 9:6, 7. 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. Zech. 9:9, 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the fole of an ass.' Micah 5:2. 'Out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel.' He is called the King by way of eminency, Cant 1:4. 'The King hath brought me

into his banqueting-house.' Ezek. 34:24. 'I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them.' That he should be a King, was declared to his mother, by the angel, before his conception in her womb, Luke 1:32, 33. 'He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' And hence he is called 'King of kings, and lord of lords.' Rev. 17:14.

3. That he has all the ensigns of royalty. He has a sword: hence it is said, Psal. 45:3. 'Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou Most Mighty.' By this we are to understand the word of God, which is the great instrument by which he maintains and propagates the glory and honour of his kingdom in the world.—A sceptre, which is another badge of royal majesty, Heb. 1:8. 'A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.' By this we are to understand his Spirit, which he puts forth in the government of the world, and in his operations of grace in the hearts of his people, guiding and conforming them, through his word and ordinances, to the holy will of God.—A crown: It is said, Rev. 6:2 that 'a crown was given him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer.' And we read of a crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, Cant. 3:11.—An escutcheon or coat of arms: He bears the lion in his arms; hence called 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah,' Rev. 5:5; which imports that he should be a great conqueror and a victorious King.—A throne, Heb. 1:8. 'Thy throne O God, is for ever and ever.—Subjects, over whom he rules, even all the creatures in heaven and in earth, Psal. 2:9. 'His kingdom ruleth over all,' Psal. 103:19. All the angels of heaven have taken the oath of allegiance to him, Heb. 1:6. 'Let all the angels of God worship him.' More especially he rules in the church. God the Father has set the crown on his head, and he holds it by immediate tenure from Heaven.—He enacts laws, which all his subjects are bound to obey. His laws are contained in his word, and they reach both the outward and the inward man.

4. That he sealed this truth with his precious blood.—When Pilate asked him, 'Art thou a King then?' he answered, 'Thou sayest that I am a King.' To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world. On this

account it is said of him, that 'before Pontius Pilate he witnessed a good confession,' 1 Tim. 6:13.

From all which it is evident, that our Lord Jesus is a King. Yea, he is King of kings, and hath a pre-eminence over them all; and therefore he is called 'the Prince of the kings of the earth.' And indeed he must needs be so; for it is by him that kings reign and princes decree justice.—They all hold their crowns by immediate tenure from this great King. And he infinitely outvies them all; having the highest throne, the largest dominions, and the longest possession.

II. I proceed to shew the nature of Christ's kingdom, or what sort of a kingdom it is. Christ has a twofold kingdom.

1. An essential kingdom. He is Lord and King over all the creatures by nature, inasmuch as he is the eternal Son of God, equal with his Father in all things. In this respect he has a universal empire, which extends over all things in heaven and earth, yea and to hell itself. He is the sole Monarch of the whole world; and all the princes and potentates of the earth are but his vicegerents that govern under, and should rule for him. He is 'the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords,' as the apostle styles him, 1 Tim. 6:15.

2. He has an economical or Mediatory kingdom. Originally the kingdom belongs to him as God, and derivatively it belongs to him as God-man and Mediator. He is constituted King by divine appointment and institution, I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. He is invested with authority over all the creatures; hence it is said, Eph. 1:22. 'God hath put all things under his feet.' He rules from sea to sea, and to the ends of all the earth, yea to the utmost bounds of God's creation. 'He hath given him power over all flesh,' as this King himself says, John 17:2. All things are subject to his government, and ready to fulfil his pleasure, when he issues his word of command.

The church is his peculiar and special kingdom. God 'hath given him to be head over all things to the church,' Eph. 1:22. This kingdom is a spiritual kingdom: hence he says, 'My kingdom is not of this world,' John 18:36. The king thereof appeared not in worldly pomp and grandeur, attended

with a splendid equipage, surrounded with armed guards, or having a brilliant and magnificent court, but in spiritual splendor, suited to the nature of his kingdom, Zech. 9:9 forecited. His throne is in the heavens, not on earth, Psal. 110:1. His sceptre is a spiritual one, the word of God, which he wields for the good of his people; it is the rod of his strength, which he sends out of Zion, and by the instrumentality of it he makes them willing in the day of his power, Ps. 110:2, 3. Compare Isa. 2:3. 'Out of Zion shall go forth a law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' The subjects of this kingdom are spiritual men, born of God, begotten of the word of truth, the incorruptible seed of the word, John 1:12. The way of its administration is spiritual, reaching neither men's bodies nor purses, but their consciences; 'the weapons' of it 'not being carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds,' 2 Cor. 10:4. Its laws are spiritual, reaching the innermost parts of the heart; and the benefits of it are spiritual, righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost, &c.

The administration of his government with respect to this kingdom is either external or internal.

1, It is external; and that again is either more general, or more particular. (1.) More general, in the course of his providence. He as Mediator has a providential influence on all the affairs of this world, ordering and determining them to the special benefit and interest of his people. Hence it is that all things work together for the good of those who love God. We have an admirable scheme of divine providence in Ezek. 1. There you may see how all the wheels, i. e. motions and revolutions here in this inferior world, are guided and directed by the Spirit that is in them; and in verse 26 it is all run up into the supreme cause: there you find one like the Son of Man, which is Jesus Christ, sitting upon the throne, and giving forth orders for the government of all. (2.) It is more particular, in his appointing laws, ordinances, and officers, in his church, to manage and govern it, and to inflict censures upon scandalous offenders.

2. It is internal, in the hearts of his people. He subdues them to himself in a day of power, writes his laws upon their hearts, and rules and governs them. In this respect it is said, Luke 17:21. 'The kingdom of God is within you.' There he sits enthroned King, and sways his royal sceptre. But more

of this anon.

III. The acts of Christ's kingly office may be reduced to these heads, viz. subduing sinners to himself, ruling and governing them, defending and protecting them, restraining his own and their enemies, and conquering them. Of each of these I shall treat in order.

First, Christ exercises his kingly office in subduing a people to himself, making them willing in the day of his power to submit to his authority and sceptre, Psal. 110:3 and so subjecting them to him as willing subjects. For this end consider,

1. That the great design of Christ's kingly office as Mediator is to raise up to himself a kingdom in the bowels of the kingdoms of the earth, Acts 15:14 and to make the subjects of men the subjects of the divine Mediator. So that those who will not allow a spiritual kingdom within a temporal one, refuse Christ to be King.

2. Our Lord has a right to this kingdom, having purchased it with his blood, Acts 20:28. He comes not without a title to conquer, but has the title of his Father's gift and his own purchase. Ere he could attain to the possession of this kingdom, he behoved to swim through a sea of bloody sufferings, and he purchased every subject with the immense price of his precious blood. Thus his title is indefeasible.

3. Though our Lord has this just right to the kingdom, yet his subjects have sworn allegiance to the Prince of darkness, and are in actual rebellion against him. That is the common character of them, which we have Tit. 3:3. 'We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.' And they will never yield to him, till they be overcome by his mighty power. He gets no subjects but by stroke of sword, and the exertion of the same power that was put forth in his own resurrection.

4. Christ as a King doth by power overcome them at length, and makes them willingly submit to him, renounce obedience to the devil, the world, and their own base lusts, his enemies, and causes them cheerfully stoop

to the yoke of his obedience, and to say, as Isa. 26:13. 'O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.'

5. The weapons wherewith Christ subdues his subjects are his word and Spirit, whereby they are effectually convinced of their sin and rebellion, and reduced to subjection to him. The word is the rod of his power, by which he has subdued nations to himself. It was by this word that in the primitive times he overturned the empire of the devil, silenced the heathen oracles, and demolished the Pagan idolatrous worship. And because the word comes to many without the Spirit, therefore Christ has many subjects in appearance only, mere pretenders to loyalty to him; they are really the subjects of Satan, and only feign submission to Zion's King. But where the Spirit comes with the word, there the heart is subjected to Christ in very deed, 2 Cor. 10:4; and Christ has a kingdom not only among them, but within them.

Secondly, Christ exercises his kingly office in ruling and governing his subjects. No kingdom can be without a government; and Christ's kingdom must needs be an orderly kingdom, which he himself governs as the supreme Head and Monarch. Now,

1. Forasmuch as the church is a visible society on earth, whose head is in heaven, Christ governs them externally.

(1.) Giving them laws according to which they are to demean themselves every way towards God and towards their neighbour, Isa. 33:22. 'The Lord is our Lawgiver.' Those laws which are the laws of the kingdom of Christ, are written in the Bible, and are a transcript of his perfections, and derive all their authority and vigour from him alone, and not from the church, or any body of men whatever. And none have power to add to or diminish from the laws of this great King.

(2.) He gives them officers in whose hands he has lodged this government who are to be accountable to him for their administration, on whom they depend, and from whom they derive their power. These are neither Pope nor prelates, none of these being officers of Christ's appointment; nor yet the civil magistrate, who as such is not so much as a member of the

church; and while there were no magistrates but what were enemies to the church and the cause of Christ, yet Christ appointed a government therein; as appears from 1 Cor. 12:28. 'God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.' But these officers are preaching and ruling elders; as is clear from what the apostle says, 1 Tim. 5:17. 'Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.'

(3.) He gives discipline and censures to controul the unruly, and check the scandalous, and keep the society clean; to which all that own Christ as a King ought to be subject, who rules his people by church discipline, as well as teaches them by the ministry of men. This appears from what our Lord himself says, Mat. 18:17, 18. 'If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.'

2. But seeing Christ is God, and his laws reach the inner man, which lies open to no other but himself, he governs his people internally.

(1.) Writing his law in their hearts, in consequence of the divine promise, Heb. 8:10 holding forth their duty to them by an inward evidence, making them to know what his will and pleasure is, that they may obey it from the heart. Hence he says, Isa. 30:21, 'Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.'

(2.) He powerfully inclines and over-rules them by his Spirit unto obedience, while he sits at the helm, and steers the ship of the soul what way he will, Acts 20:22. To which we may add,

(3.) Those secret rewards and corrections which are sent from his own hand; while he bestows on them spiritual comforts and soul-feasts when in the way of their duty, and gives them such strokes for their correction, even for secret faults, as may let them see, that though their King be in heaven, yet he judges on the earth. Hence he says to the church of

Pergamos, Rev. 2:17. 'To him that over-cometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.' And to the church of the Laodiceans he says, Rev. 3:19. 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.'

Thirdly, Christ executes his kingly office in defending his people. The kingdom of Christ always had and ever will have many enemies, who will continually be within bow-shot of its subjects. These enemies are the devil, the flesh, the world, and death. Christ defends against these, as a king defends his subjects.

1. By preserving his church in being, notwithstanding all the cunning and furious attempts to destroy her. Hence the bush, though it burn, will not consume. Of her lie says, Isa. 27:3. 'I the Lord do keep it: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.' And he keeps every particular believer, so as they never totally and finally fall away, John 10:28. 'I give unto them eternal life (says he): and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.'

2. By giving them necessary support and help under all sufferings, troubles, and temptations, never leaving them, no not at the hour of death. Hence it is said, Isa. 63:9. 'In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.' 1 Cor. 10:13. 'There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' For this he makes use of the angels as he will, they being 'all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation,' Heb. 1:14. And he can employ men, even the worst of men, in that service: hence the earth helped the woman, and opened her month, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth, Rev. 12:16.

Fourthly, Christ executes his kingly office in restraining his enemies, and those of his people. While, though their power remains with them to annoy his people, yet he sets bounds to them, over which they cannot

pass; Psal. 76:10. 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee (says the Psalmist): the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.'—Christ has all his and his people's enemies, outward and inward, in a chain: and no further can they go than he is pleased to let out a link to them. If it were not so, all would quickly be over-run; but one jot they cannot go beyond his permission.

Fifthly and lastly, Christ executes his kingly office in conquering his enemies, and those of his people. This conquest is twofold. (1.) When now he takes away their power in part. Thus is the devil conquered already, that he has not all the world so at his will, and under his yoke of slavery, as before the coming of Christ, when he ruled among the nations with an unlimited sway. And thus the devil and the flesh are conquered in the day of converting grace, when the power of these enemies is broken, and the captives are delivered from the tyranny and bondage in which they were formerly held. Thus the wicked world is conquered, when their rage against the people of God is laid aside, and the church enjoys tranquillity: 'For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her, Zech. 2:5. And death is conquered when its sting is taken away, which it is as to every believer; so that they can say, 'O death, where is thy sting?' 1 Cor. 15:55. (2.) There is a complete conquest remaining, which will be at the last day, when Christ will gather in all his people into one glorious company, transport them into those mansions of bliss which he has prepared for them, and reign over them for ever in heaven: when all his own, and his people's enemies are utterly destroyed from the presence of God, and the glory of his power. 'For he must reign till all his enemies be put under his feet,' 1 Cor. 15:25. Then death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire, Rev. 20:14 and the devil and all his slaves shall be shut up for ever in the infernal Tophet. This shall be the most signal display of the glorious conquests of this King, and the trophies of his victory shall be the subject of the song of the redeemed for ever.

This kingdom of Christ will be eternal, Luke 1:33. 'He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' Dan. 2:44. 'The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed,—and it shall stand for ever.' It is true the way of its present

administration will cease, and so he will deliver up the kingdom to his Father, but exhibiting it as consummated and perfected. But Christ shall remain the King, Head, and Husband of his church for ever, Rev. 19:7 and he shall be the eternal bond of union betwixt God and the saints.

IV. Let us consider some of the properties or qualities of Zion's King.

1. He is a King of ancient, glorious, and honourable extract: for he is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. His goings forth were of old, from everlasting. And he is God over all, blessed for ever.

2. He is an absolute king, who makes laws for his subjects, but is not bound by any himself. His will is his law, and he does without controul whatever seems good to himself in heaven and in earth. Yea, so uncontrollable is his government, that none may oblige him to render a reason of his actions. 'Who may say unto him, What dost thou?' But though Christ be an absolute monarch, yet his government is no way tyrannical, but managed according to the eternal rules of righteousness, justice, and holiness.

3. He is a wise King: for he is the wisdom of God, yea, God only wise; and therefore infinitely able to guide his subjects through all the labyrinths of danger and difficulty wherein they may be involved; while he 'teaches them in the way of wisdom, and leads them in right paths; so that when they go, their steps shall not be straitened: and when they run, they shall not stumble,' Prov. 4:11, 12.

4. Christ is a very powerful King: for he has more than the strength of an unicorn; yea, he has an arm that is full of power, being the Lord of hosts, strong and mighty in battle; and therefore infinitely able to secure his subjects against all the attempts which devils or men can make against them. Yea, so great is his strength, and so mighty is his power, that one angry blast thereof will make all his enemies to fly as chaff before the wind; and therefore he says, 'Who will set the briars and thorns against me in battle; I would go through them, I would burn them up together,' Isa. 27:4.

5. Christ is a just King: 'Just and right is he.' Though clouds and darkness may be about him, yet 'justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne,' Psal. 97:2. So that his government is impartially exercised, without any by-respect to the great or the small, the rich or the poor, &c. Neither the meanness of the poor and low, nor the honour and greatness of the high and noble, will incline him to do any thing in the least inconsistent with the immutable rules of perfect justice. 'He accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor; for they are all the work of his hands,' Job 34:19.

6. Christ is a very merciful King. Mercy is the prevailing attribute of his nature, which he delights to make the children of men feel the benign effects of. Therefore he has proclaimed himself to be 'the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious.' He does not willingly grieve nor afflict the children of men. He takes no pleasure in the blood of his most implacable and inveterate foes; and bears with a very tender hand upon his afflicted, broken, and discouraged people. For the bruised reed he will not break, nor quench the smoking flax. He heals the broken in heart, and binds up all their wounds. In all the afflictions of his people he is afflicted; and he that touches them, touches the apple of his eye.

7. Christ is a very meek and patient King. Never any in the world could have borne such indignities, or digested such affronts, as he has met with from such of his own subjects, to whom he has shewn the most distinguishing kindness. Had he not been thus patient, Judah and Ephraim had soon been unpeopled. 'As for them, they were bent to backsliding: though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him,' Hos. 11:7. Though he sent many prophets unto them, calling upon them, and saying, 'Return, ye backsliding children' &c. yet they did not regard them. Who after this could imagine, that this just and jealous King would have entertained one thought of kindness towards them? yet hear what he says, 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together,' ver. 8.

8. Christ is a very beautiful King. His glory outshines the sun in its full strength. The united constellations of all created beauty fall infinitely

short of his; for he is fairer than the children of men, yea, he is altogether lovely.

9. Christ is a most humble and condescending King: for he does not disdain to be acquainted with the meanest among the sons of men; the beggar will be as welcome to him as the prince. The poor and the rich are all one to him; and he takes as much notice of Job on the dunghill, as of David on the throne. Hear what the prophet, in the name of this great King, says, Isa. 66:1, 2. 'Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? for all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.'

10. Christ is a very rich and opulent King. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. He is the heir of all things. Honour and riches are with him, yea, durable riches and righteousness. So that those who are his honest and faithful subjects shall never want any thing that is good for them. Such are the immense treasures and infinite riches of this glorious King, that all the ministers on earth, and all the angels in heaven, cannot possibly lay them open. For can they grasp the heavens in their arms, and the sun in the hollow of their hands? can they weigh the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Suppose they could do all this, and a thousand times more, yet could they not give an account of the estate of this my King. So that his subjects shall never want either grace or glory.

11. He is an immortal and everlasting King. 'The heavens and the earth shall perish, but he shall endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shall they be changed. But he is the same, and his years shall have no end,' Psal. 102:26, 27. Though the best, the wisest, and the richest kings upon earth will die, and leave their subjects exposed to many inconveniences consequent on their death, yet this King of glory lives for evermore, and will rule over his subjects with justice, mercy, and righteousness, through all the ages of eternity.

It remains to make some improvement of this subject.

1. The kings of the earth have no ground to grudge the kingdom of Christ its freedom in their dominions; seeing it is a spiritual kingdom, and quite of another nature than the kingdoms of this world; and interferes not with any of the just rights and prerogatives of earthly crowns. Yet how sad is it that this kingdom should be an eye-sore to the kings of the earth, and that they should employ their power to suppress and bear it down?

2. The Pope's supremacy, and the supremacy of the magistrate over all persons, and in all causes, whereby they have been made heads of the church, is daring blasphemy against Christ, a bold usurpation of his crown and dignity, and high rebellion against him, who will not suffer the jewels to be stolen from his crown, to deck the head of any earthly power whatever, without the severest testimony of his resentment.

3. There is a government of the church distinct from and independent upon the civil government, lodged in the hands of church-officers, whereby they have a power, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to meet in judicatories, transact matters there according to the word and laws of this King, to dissolve their meetings in his name, to appoint fasts and thanksgivings, as the state of the church may require, to inflict censures on offenders, bind and loose, and to do every thing necessary for advancing this kingdom in a spiritual way, but no otherwise. And whoever presumes to hinder them in these acts of administration, or arrogate any of them to themselves, are in so far enemies to Christ and his royal prerogatives.

4. This government of the church is not alterable by any power on earth, whether civil or ecclesiastic; nor have they that are entrusted with it any power to give up the rights and privileges conferred on them by Christ to any person or persons whatsoever. If they do so, they are unfaithful to their trust, and their conduct will be highly resented another day.

5. None have power to appoint any parts of worship in the Church that Christ has not appointed. For he is the sole Lawgiver of the church, and has in his word appointed the platform of the worship which he requires of his subjects. And therefore for any to appoint ceremonies and rights of worship which bear not the stamp of his institution, act in opposition to his laws; and all their rites are useless and unprofitable. Equally culpable

are those who presume to make any terms of communion, or of admission to the ordinances of the church, but such as Christ has left behind him. This is high rebellion against the King of Zion.

6. The truth of the kingdom of Christ is a solid ground of suffering, on which people may comfortably lose whatever is dear to them in the world, knowing they are in the way of their duty. And this was the ground of the sufferings of the Lord's people in the persecuting reigns before the Revolution, whose memory ought to be always regarded, for their zealous and firm adherence to the prerogatives of Christ's kingdom.

7. The church shall ride out all the storms that can blow upon her, whether from earth or hell. All plots and contrivances against her shall be defeated in the end; for her King liveth, and will never suffer the gates of hell to prevail against her. The crown shall flourish on his head, when the church's enemies shall be ruined, and their kingdoms laid by for ever.

8. However weak any poor believer be amongst many enemies, yet the broken ship shall surely come to land. The spark of grace shall be preserved amidst an ocean of difficulties and corruptions, within or without. The seed of grace sown in the heart shall be maintained, and spring up in the fruits of holiness. All Christ's honest subjects shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

9. Whoever they be that refuse subjection to the ordinances and discipline of Christ's house, do in so far reject Christ from ruling over them. Consider this, ye that neglect a regular attendance upon the ordinances of divine institution, and will not submit to discipline and censure for your scandalous, and offensive behaviour. Ye are the enemies of Zion's King, and your conduct plainly declares, that ye will not have this man to reign over you. Repent of this your rebellion, otherwise ye shall be slain as his enemies.

10. See, believers, ye that are striving against sin and Satan, and waging war with your lusts and all Christ's enemies, to whom you are to have recourse for help in all your difficulties; even to your Almighty King, who is infinitely able to help you in all straits. Make use of him daily as your King, applying and trusting to him for life, strength, defence, and victory

over all your enemies.

11. Lastly, Ye that are strangers to Christ, captives to Satan, and under a miserable thralldom to your own lusts, will ye be persuaded to come under the sceptre and government of King Jesus; take on his yoke, and subject yourselves to him and his blessed government. For motives, consider,

(1.) The great glory and dignity of his person. He is God equal with the Father, the wonder of men and angels. The most glorious monarch that ever swayed sceptre among men, is but like a worm of the earth, or a despicable insect in the air, compared to him. All created excellencies fall under a vail, when his glory begins to shine.

(2.) He has the best right to govern your souls. The devil and your vile lusts are all usurpers. But Christ is your rightful Lord. He has an original right to you as God, and a derivative right as Mediator. He hath an unquestionable title by the grant of the Father, Acts 2:36. 'Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.' And he hath a right by his own merit and purchase, Rom. 14:9. "For this end Christ both died, and rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.' Ye are his, whether ye will or not. Ye are entirely at his disposal. He has more power over you than the potter has over the clay. Your own consent and willingness adds nothing to his title; but it will fearfully aggravate your sin, if ye refuse it.

(3.) Consider the misery of your condition till once ye submit to him. Ye are under a miserable bondage to the devil; ye are slaves to the prince of darkness; that spirit rules in you that worketh in all the children of disobedience. Your condition will grow still worse and worse, till it be incapable of any further addition of misery. Ye are now without God, without the promises of the covenant, without peace, without the pardon of sin, having no communion with God, or title to heaven. Ye are slaves to your sordid lusts, under the curse of the law, and condemned already. Whenever ye die out of Christ, ye shall die in your sins; and he that was your ruler and leader in this world, will be both your companion and tormentor in the world to come. O fearful condition! Can ye sleep quietly

in your chains? When ye hear that Christ was anointed by the Father to preach good tidings to the meek, to proclaim liberty to captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; should not this make you sigh, may cry, through the grates of the prison, to this glorious Deliverer who stands at the door? When ye see Christ's standard pitched in the gospel, and his glorious banner displayed there, will ye not repair to it, and list yourselves among his faithful subjects?

(4.) It is your greatest dignity to be subjects to Christ. Theodosius the Emperor thought it a greater honour to be a servant to Christ, than the head of an empire. Christ's subjects are called vessels of honour, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, &c. They are consecrated, and set apart for God, to be the objects of his special grace, and the instruments of his glory and service in the world. This advanceth them to great dignity and honour. Subject yourselves then to Christ, and ye shall arrive at the highest pinnacle of honour.

(5.) His government is most sweet and pleasant. His yoke is easy, and his burden light. His cross is better than the world's crown. Submit then to his easy sceptre.

(6.) Consider the great happiness that will attend your subjecting yourselves to Christ's government. It is introductive to every privilege, mercy, and blessing, that men can desire. By this ye will be delivered from the vassalage of Satan, the servitude of sin, the malediction of the law, and danger of the wrath to come. Let this prevail on you to submit to this King.

(7.) By this ye will put the crown upon his head, and give him the reward of his bloody death and sufferings, when ye renounce sin and Satan, and all the lusts and idols that exercised dominion over you before, and betake yourselves to him by faith, and give your hearty consent that he shall reign in your souls.

(8.) This is the design of all God's ordinances and dispensations; all the arrows in the gospel-quiver are levelled at this mark; it is the point and centre into which all these blessed lines are drawn. Submit to him, then, and disappoint not the design of all his love and grace to poor sinners.

(9.) Ye can have no saving benefit by Christ, unless ye submit to him as your King. It is through his kingly office that all his other offices are made effectual. All the blessings and benefits of his purchase are conveyed to believers this way. It is by his regal power that he changes their natures, powerfully inclines them to believe on him, and to love and obey him. If ye accept not of him as your King, ye can have no benefit by him at all. Ye must receive him as your Lord, as well as your Prophet and Priest.

(10.) Lastly, If ye will not stoop and bow to him, he will break you in pieces. God has settled an irreversible decree, that 'to him every knee shall bow;' and if they do it not cheerfully and willingly, they shall be made to do it with force and constraint. He has a rod of iron, and therewith he will break in pieces the mightiest potentates of the earth that will not subject themselves to him. Hence we have that counsel given them by the Spirit of God, Psal. 2:10, 11, 12. 'Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in him.'

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