

Monergism

THE THRONE OF GRACE

*"LET US THEREFORE COME BOLDLY
UNTO THE THRONE OF GRACE, THAT
WE MAY OBTAIN MERCY, AND FIND
GRACE TO HELP IN TIME OF NEED."
HEBREWS 4:16*

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by John Bunyan

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ADVERTISEMENT BY THE EDITOR

The churches of Christ are very much indebted to the Rev. Charles Doe, for the preservation and publishing of this treatise. It formed one of the ten excellent manuscripts left by Bunyan at his decease, prepared for the press. Having treated on the nature of prayer in his searching work on 'praying with the spirit and with the understanding also,' in which he proves from the sacred scriptures that prayer cannot be merely read or said, but must be the spontaneous effusions of the heart principally in private, or at the domestic altar upon set times in the morning and evening, or more publicly in social meetings for praise and prayer, or in the public assembly of the church—all being acceptable, only as it is offered up in spirit and in truth—he now directs us to the proper medium which our mental powers should use in drawing near to the Divine Being. We have to approach the universal spirit, the creator, the preserver, the bountiful benefactor of our race; and, at the same time, the infinitely holy one, the supreme judge and just rewarder or punisher of all creatures. How shall we, who are impure and unclean by nature and by practice, draw near unto him who is so infinitely holy? Others of our race who were equally guilty have held acceptable converse with God, and received special marks of his favour. We all know that a talented man, high in office, retired at certain times for prayer; this gave offence, and a law was made, by which prayer to God was interdicted for thirty days. He refused obedience to a human law which interfered with the divine authority, and for this he was cast

into the den of lions; but they hurt him not, although they devoured his persecutors. When a beloved minister was seized and imprisoned for his love to Christ, the church held a prayer meeting on his account, and while they were praying God sent his angel to the prison. In vain four quaternions of soldiers kept guard, two of them in the prisoner's cell, while the servant of Christ, who was loaded with chains and doomed to an ignominious death, slept sweetly between the armed men. The angel awakes him, his chains fall off, no noise can awake his guard, the prison doors open, and he was restored to his beloved charge. They were yet imploring his deliverance, when he stood in their midst to tell the wondrous miracle, wrought in answer to their prayer. Again, two of their much-loved ministers were seized and beaten, and cast into jail, their feet being made fast in the stocks. In the dark hour of midnight they prayed and praised God, when an earthquake was sent, which shook the prison and threw open its doors, and the jailor, with his house, became converts to the faith. Millions of instances might have been recorded of prayer heard and answered. The child Samuel, and also Ishmael. The Magdalene. The thief on the cross. Ananias, who was directed to relieve the stricken persecutor Saul, for 'behold he prayeth.' But innumerable prayers have been read and offered up which have not been answered. What then is the acceptable form, and what the appointed medium consecrated for our access to God, by which prayer is sanctified and accepted? If ye love me, saith the Saviour, keep my commandments, and whatsoever ye shall ask IN MY NAME that will I do. A sense of our want and unworthiness leads us to God in that new and living way consecrated by Christ though the veil, that is to say, his flesh (Heb 10:20). By that way we can 'come boldly,' because it is 'a throne of grace,' and there and there only we can 'obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.' Wondrous throne! Blessed encouragement to the poor pilgrim,

traversing the desert surrounded by enemies, his own heart by nature being one of the most formidable of them!

It is of great importance to all, and especially to the young, to attain correct definite ideas of religious truths. Bunyan had remarkably clear views, arising from his strong feelings and the rugged path by which he was led to Christ. His definition of the difference between grace and mercy is very striking: 'Mercy signifies pitifulness to objects in a miserable condition. Grace acts as a free agent, not wrought upon by our misery but of God's own princely mind.' Christ is the throne of grace—in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead, and yet he was found in fashion as a man, he took on him the seed of Abraham, and was made like unto his brethren, and offered himself up as the sacrifice for sin. Thus he is the throne of grace on the mercy-seat covering the law. Here he is an object of worship to the angels on the right hand of God. In him the uncreated glory, the dazzling effulgence of God, is so veiled in his glorified body, that man, poor sinful man, can lift up his eyes to behold the place where God's honour most richly dwelleth, and find acceptance and grace to help in every time of need.

Take heed, sinner, this is your only access to heaven. The mercyseat and throne of grace is God's resting—place; the throne which governs his church, and which eventually will govern all nations. This throne, invisible to mortal eyes, is present at all times and in all places. After the saints have been supplied with all needful grace in this world, their glorified spirits will see the great white throne, and hear the voice proceeding from it, saying, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you; while from that throne the direful thunderbolts will be hurled upon the despisers of divine grace, and they will hurry into irretrievable misery. The safety of the Christian entirely depends upon his being found 'looking unto Jesus':

his glorified human body is the throne of grace—the source of all blessedness to his worshippers—the gate of heaven—the way, the truth and the life. Yes, proud nature, HE who was the babe at Bethlehem, the poor carpenter's son, who, notwithstanding his miracles of wisdom, power, and mercy, was despised and rejected of men, HIM hath God exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and the remission of sins, the only medium of access to heaven. Before him every knee shall bow. Wonders of grace to God belong. 'Busy thyself, fellow christian, about this blessed office of Christ. It is full of good, it is full of sweet, it is full of heaven, it is full of relief and succour for the tempted and dejected; wherefore, I say again, study these things, give thyself wholly to them.' Reader, listen to these words of Bunyan, and may the Divine blessing attend the reading of his works.

GEO. OFFOR.

THE SAINTS' PRIVILEGE AND PROFIT

'LET US THEREFORE COME BOLDLY UNTO THE THRONE OF GRACE, THAT WE MAY OBTAIN MERCY, AND FIND GRACE TO HELP IN TIME OF NEED.'—HEBREWS 4:16

This epistle is indited and left to the church by the Holy Ghost, to show particularly, and more distinctly, the high priesthood of Jesus Christ, and the excellent benefits that his people have thereby. In

which both the excellency of his person, and transcendent glory of his office, beyond either priest or priesthood of the law, is largely set forth before us, in chapter 1:2, &c.

Wherefore, in order to our beneficial reading of this epistle, the Spirit of God calls upon us, first, most seriously to consider what an one this excellent person is: 'Wherefore, holy brethren,' saith he, you that are 'partakers of the heavenly calling,' consequently you that are related to and that are concerned in the undertaking of this holy one, 'consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus' (Heb 3:1). Consider how great and how fit this man is for so holy and glorious a calling. He being so high, as to be far above all heavens; so great, as to be the Son of, and God equal with the Father. Consider him also as to his humanity, how that he is really flesh of our flesh; sinlessly so, sympathisingly so, so in all the compassions of a man; he is touched with, compassioneth, pitieth, loveth, succoureth us, and feeleth our infirmities, and maketh our case his own. Nay, he again, from the consideration of his greatness and love, puts us upon a confident reliance on his undertaking, and also presseth us to a bold approach of that throne of grace where he continually abideth in the execution of his office: 'Seeing then,' saith he, 'that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace' (Heb 3:14–16).

In the words we have, First, An exhortation; [and] Second, An implication that we shall reap a worthy benefit, if we truly put the exhortation into practice. The exhortation is that we shall come boldly to the throne of grace: 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace.' In all we have an intimation of five things.

FIRST, That God hath more thrones than one; else the throne of grace need not to be specified by name. 'Let us come unto the throne of grace.' SECOND, That the godly can distinguish one throne from another. For the throne here is not set forth by where or what signs it should be known; it is only propounded to us by its name, and so left for saints to make their approach unto it: 'Let us come unto the throne of grace.' THIRD, The third thing is, the persons intended by this exhortation, 'Let us therefore come.' Us: What us? or who are they that by this exhortation are called upon to come? 'Let us.' FOURTH, The manner of the coming of these persons to this throne of grace; and that is through the veil, boldly, confidently: 'Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace.' FIFTH, the motive to this exhortation; and that is twofold, First, Because we have so great an high priest, one that cannot but be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace.' And, second, because we are sure to speed: 'That we may obtain mercy, and find grace,' &c. I shall, as God shall help me, handle these things in order.

THAT GOD HATH MORE THRONES THAN ONE

FIRST. For the first, That God hath more thrones than one. He hath a throne in heaven, and a throne on earth: 'The Lord's throne is in heaven,' and 'they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord' (Psa 11:4; Jer 3:17). He ruleth over the angels; he ruleth in his church. 'He ruleth in Jacob, unto the ends of the earth' (Psa 59:13). Yea, he has a throne and seat of majesty among the princes and great ones of the world. He ruleth or 'judgeth among the gods' (Psa 82:1). There is a

throne for him as a Father, and a throne for Christ as a giver of reward to all faithful and overcoming Christians: 'To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne' (Rev 3:21).

There is also to be a throne of judgment, on which God by Christ, at the great and notable day, shall sit to give to the whole world, their last or final sentence; from which, no, not, not by any means, they shall never be released. This throne is made mention of in the New Testament, and is called by Christ 'the throne of his glory,' and 'a great white throne' (Matt 25:31; Rev 20:11). And his presence, when he sits upon this throne, will be so terrible, that nothing shall be able to abide it that is not reconciled to God by him before.

Wherefore it is not amiss that I give you this hint, because it may tend to inform unwary Christians, when they go to God, that they address not themselves to him at rovers, or at random; but that when they come to him for benefits, they direct their prayer to the throne of grace, or to God as considered on a throne of grace. For he is not to be found a God merciful and gracious, but as he is on the throne of grace. This is his holy place, out of which he is terrible to the sons of men, and cannot be gracious unto them. For as when he shall sit at the last day upon his throne of judgment, he will neither be moved with the tears of misery of the world to do any thing for them, that in the least will have a tendency to a relaxation of the least part of their sorrow; so now let men take him where they will, or consider him as they list, he gives no grace, no special grace, but as considered on the throne of grace: wherefore they that will pray, and speed, they must come to a throne of grace: to a God that sitteth on a throne of grace: 'Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain,' &c.

The unbeliever, the erroneous and superstitious, consider not this: wherefore they speak to God as their fancies lead them, not as the word directs them, and therefore obtain nothing. Ask the carnal man to whom he prays? he will say to God. Ask him where this God is? he will say in heaven. But ask him how, or under what notion he is to be considered there? and he will give a few generals, but cannot direct his soul unto him as he is upon a throne of grace, as the apostle here biddeth, saying, 'Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace.' Wherefore they come and go, or rather go and come to no advantage at all: they find nothing but their labour or words for their pains. For the right considering of God when I go unto him, and how or where I may find him gracious and merciful, is all in all; and mercy and grace is then obtained when we come to him as sitting upon a throne of grace.

THE GODLY CAN DISTINGUISH ONE THRONE FROM ANOTHER

SECOND. We will therefore come to the second thing, to wit, that the godly can distinguish one thing from another. And the reason why I so conclude, is, as I said, because the throne here is not set forth unto us here, by where or what signs it should be known; it is only propounded to us by its name, a throne of grace, and so left for saints to make their approach thereto: 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace.' We will therefore take this conclusion into two parts, and consider it under this double position. FIRST, That there is a throne of grace. SECOND, That it is the privilege of the godly to distinguish from all other thrones whatever this throne of grace.

FIRST, There is a throne of grace. This must be true, because the text saith it; also it is that of which the mercy-seat, so often made

mention of in the Old Testament, was a type, shadow, or figure; nor is the terms of seat and throne of any strength to make this supposition void. For it is common for the antitype to be put forth in words unto us more glorious than is the figure or shadow of that thing. And the reason is, for that the heavenly things themselves are far more excellent than the shadow by which they are represented. What is a sheep, a bull, an ox, or calf, to Christ, or their blood to the blood of Christ? What is Jerusalem that stood in Canaan, to that new Jerusalem that shall come down from heaven? or the tabernacle made with corruptible things, to the body of Christ, or heaven itself? No marvel then, if they be set forth unto us by words of an inferior rank; the most full and aptest being reserved to set out the highest things withal.

Before I proceed to give you a more particular description of this throne of grace, as also how it may be know, I will a little touch upon the terms themselves, and show briefly what must be implied by them.

Import of the Term Grace

First, By this word grace, we are to understand God's free, sovereign, good pleasure, whereby he acteth in Christ towards his people. Grace and mercy therefore are terms that have their distinct significations; mercy signifies pitifulness, or a running over of infinite bowels to objects in a miserable and helpless condition. But grace signifies that God still acts in this as a free agent, not being wrought upon by the misery of the creature, as a procuring cause; but of his own princely mind.

Were there no objects of pity among those that in the old world perished by the flood, or that in Sodom were burned with fire from

heaven? doubtless, according to our apprehension, there were many: but Noah, and he only, found grace in God's eyes; not because that of himself he was better than the rest, but God acted as a gracious prince towards him, and let him share in mercy of his own sovereign will and pleasure. But this at first was not so fully made manifest as it was afterwards. Wherefore the propitiatory was not called, as here, a throne of grace, but a mercy-seat, albeit there was great glory in these terms also; for, by mercy-seat was showed, not only that God had compassion for men, but that also to be good was as his continual resting-place, whither he would at length retire, and where he would sit down and abide, whatever terrible or troublesome work for his church was on the wheel at present. For a seat is a place of rest, yea, is prepared for that end; and in that here mercy is called that seat, it is to show, as I said, that whatever work is on the wheel in the world, let it be never so dreadful and amazing, yet to God's church it shall end in mercy, for that is God's resting-place. Wherefore after God had so severely threatened and punished his church under the name of a whorish woman, as you may read in the prophet Ezekiel, he saith, 'So will I make my fury toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee; and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry.' And again, speaking of the same people and of the same punishments, he saith, 'Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.' And again, 'I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God' (Eze 16:42, 60–63). These, with many more places, show that mercy is God's place of rest, and thither he will retire at last, and from thence will bless his church, his people.

But yet these terms, a throne, the throne of grace, doth more exceed in glory: not only because the word grace shows that God, by all that he doth towards us in saving and forgiving, acts freely as the highest Lord, and of his own good-will and pleasure, but also for that he now saith, that his grace is become a king, a throne of grace. A throne is not only a seat for rest, but a place of dignity and authority. This is known to all. Wherefore by this word, a throne, or the throne of grace, is intimated, that God ruleth and governeth by his grace. And this he can justly do: 'Grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom 5:21). So then, in that here is mention made of a throne of grace, it sheweth that sin, and Satan, and death, and hell, must needs be subdued. For these last mentioned are but weakness and destruction; but grace is life, and the absolute sovereign over all these to the ruling of them utterly down. A throne of grace!

But this then God plainly declareth, that he is resolved this way to rule, and that he pointeth at sin as his deadly foe: and if so, then, 'where sin aboundeth, grace must much more abound' (Rom 5:20). For it is the wisdom and discretion of all that rule, to fortify themselves against them that rebel against them what they can. Wherefore he saith again, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace' (Rom 6:14). Sin seeks for the dominion, and grace seeks for the dominion; but sin shall not rule, because it has no throne in the church among the godly. Grace is king. Grace has the throne, and the people of God are not under the dominion of sin, but of the grace of God, the which they are here implicitly bid to acknowledge, in that they are bid to come boldly to it for help: 'That we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help; to help in time of need.' For as from the hand and power of the king comes help and succour to the subject, when assaulted by an enemy; so from the throne of grace, or from grace as it reigns, comes the help

and health of God's people. Hence it is said again, 'A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary' (Jer 17:12). Here then the saints take shelter from the roaring of the devil, from the raging of their lusts, and from the fury of the wicked. That also is a very notable place, 'He will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea' (Micah 7:19). He speaks here of God as solacing himself in mercy, and as delighting of himself in the salvation of his people, and that without comparison: 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy' (Micah 7:18). Thus is mercy and grace got into the throne, reigns, and will assuredly conquer all; yea, will conquer, and that with a shout. 'Mercy rejoiceth against judgment' (James 2:13). Yea, glorieth when it getteth the victory of sin, and subdueth the sinner unto God and to his own salvation, as is yet more fully showed in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15). But this, briefly to show you something of the nature of the terms, and what must necessarily be implied thereby.

What is to be inferred from the term 'throne of grace'

Second. We will in the next place show what is to be inferred from hence. And,

1. To be sure this is inferred, that converted men are not every way, or in every sense, free from the being of sin. For, were they, they need not betake themselves to a throne of grace for help; when it saith there is grace in God, it inferreth, that there is sin in the godly; and when it saith, grace reigns, as upon a throne, it implies, that sin would ascend the throne, would reign, and would have the dominion

over the children of God. This also is manifest, when he saith, 'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof' (Rom 7:12). And the only way to prevent it is to apply ourselves, as by the text we are directed, to the throne of grace for help against it.

2. The text implies, that at certain times the most godly man in the world may be hard put to it by the sin that dwelleth in him; yea, so hard put to it, as that there can be no ways to save himself from a fall, but by imploring heaven and the throne of grace for help. This is called the needy time, the time when the wayfaring man that knocked at David's door shall knock at ours (2 Sam 12); or when we are got into the sieve into which Satan did get Peter (Luke 22:31); or when those fists are about our ears that were about Paul's; and when that thorn pricks us that Paul said was in his flesh (2 Cor 12:7, 8). But why, or how comes it to pass, that the godly are so hard put to it at these times, but because there is in them, that is, in their flesh, no good thing, but consequently all aptness to close in with the devil and his suggestions, to the overthrow of the soul? But now here we are presented with a throne of grace, unto which, as presented with a throne of grace, unto which, as David says, we must 'continually resort'; and that is the way to obtain relief, and to find help in time of need (Psa 71:3).

3. As Christians are sometimes in imminent dangers of falling, so sometimes it is so, that they are fallen, are down, down dreadfully, and can by no means lift up themselves. And this happeneth unto them because they have been remiss as to the conscionable performance of what by this exhortation they are enjoined to. They have not been constant supplicants at this throne for preserving grace; for had they, they should, as the text suggests, most certainly have kept from such a fall; help should have been granted them in

their needful time. But that is it, of which such are guilty, which is written in the prophet Isaiah, 'But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel' (Isa 43:22). Therefore thou art profaned, therefore thou art given to reproaches (Isa 43:28). Now, as they which are falling are kept from coming down by coming to this throne of grace, so those that are fallen must rise by the sceptre of love extended to them from thence. Men may fall by sin, but cannot raise up themselves without the help of grace. Wherefore, it is worthy of our inquiry after a more thorough knowledge of this throne of grace, whence, as we may well perceive, our help comes, and by what comes from thence we are made to stand. I therefore come now to a more particular description of this throne of grace; and to show how the godly know, or may know it, from other thrones of God.

What this throne of grace is

First, then, this throne of grace is the humanity, or heart and soul of Jesus Christ, in which God sits and resteth for ever in love towards them that believe in him. Forasmuch as Christ did, by the body of his flesh, when here, reconcile them unto the Father. 'The key of the house of David,' saith God, 'will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open and none shall shut; and he shall shut and none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his Father's house' (Isa 22:22, 23). For a glorious throne to his Father's house, that is, for his Father's house, to come to their Father by; for that they shall always find him thereon; or, as another scripture saith, in Christ reconciling them unto him, not imputing to them their trespasses and sins (2 Cor 5:19). Nor is it possible, that we lay aside the human nature of Christ, for us to find any such thing as a throne of grace, either in earth or heaven; for that

then nothing can be found to be the rest of God. 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,' is God's own language; but there is none other of whom he hath so said (Matt 3:17). Wherefore he resteth in him towards us, and in him only. Besides, grace cannot be extended towards us but in a way of justice; for that the law and our sin obstructeth another way (Gen 3:24). But, lay the human nature of Christ aside, and where will you find, THAT that shall become such a sacrifice to justice for the sin of men, as that God, for the sake of that, shall both forgive, and cause that grace for ever should reign towards us in such a way? It reigns through righteousness, or justice, by Jesus Christ, and no way else. Christ Jesus, therefore, is this throne of grace; or him, or that, by which grace reigns towards the children of God (Rom 5:21).

That scripture also gives us a little light herein, 'And I beheld, and lo! in the midst of the throne,' &c., 'stood a Lamb, as it had been slain' (Rev 5:6). This is to show the cause why grace is so freely let out to us, even for that there stands there, in the midst of the throne, and in the midst of the elders, a lamb as it had been slain, or, as it was made a sacrifice for our sin; for, as a slain lamb, he now lives in the midst of the throne, and is the meritorious cause of all the grace that we enjoy. And though it seems by this text that the throne is one thing and the Lamb another, yet the Lamb of God is the throne, though not as a lamb or sacrifice, but as one that by his sacrifice has made way for grace to run like a river into the world. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, is ALL; he is the throne, the altar, the priest, the sacrifice, and all: but he is the throne, the priest, the altar, and the sacrifice, under divers considerations. He is not the throne as he is the priest; he is not the priest as he is the sacrifice; he is not the sacrifice as he is the altar; yet is truly all these. Yea, there is no throne of grace, no high priest, no propitiatory sacrifice, &c., but he. Of all which we may yet speak further before we conclude this treatise. I conclude, then, that

Christ Jesus, in his human nature, is this throne of grace. In his human nature, I say, he has by that completely accomplished all things necessary for the making way for grace to be extended to men; and that that is not only God's place of rest, but that by and from which, as upon a glorious throne, his grace shall reign over devil, death, sin, hell, and the grave, for ever. This human nature of Christ is also called the tabernacle of God; for the fullness of the Godhead dwells in it bodily. It is God's habitation, his dwelling-place, his chair and throne of state. He doth all in and by it, and without it he doth not any thing. But to pass this, let us come to the next thing.

Where the throne of grace is erected

Second. We will now come to discourse of the placing of this throne of grace, or to discover where it is erected. And for this we must repair to the type, which, as was said before, is called the mercy-seat; the which we find, not in the outward court, nor yet within the first veil (Heb 9:3–5); which signifies, not in the world, nor in the church on earth, but in the holy of the holies, or after the second veil, the flesh of Christ (Heb 10:20). There then is this throne of God, this throne of grace, and no where here below. And for as much as it is called the throne of God, of grace, and is there, it signifieth that it is the highest and most honourable. Hence he is said to be far above all heavens, and to have a name above every name. Wherefore he that will come to this throne of grace, must know what manner of coming it is by which he must approach it; and that is, not personally, but by runnings out of heart; not by himself, but by his Priest, his High Priest; for so it was in the type (Heb 9:7). Into the second, where the mercy-seat was, went the high priest alone, that is, personally, and the people by him, as he made intercession for them. This then must be done by those that will approach this throne of grace. They must

go to God, as he is enthroned IN Christ; BY Christ, as he is the High Priest of his church; and they must go to him in the holiest, by him.

But again, as this throne of grace is in the Holiest, not in the world, not in the church on earth, so it is in this Holiest set up above the ark of the testimony; for so was the mercy-seat, it was set up in the most holy place, above the ark of the testimony (Deut 10:1–5; 1 Kings 8:9; 2 Chron 5:10). The ark of the testimony. What was that? Why it was the place of the law, the ark in which it was kept: the testimony was the law, the ark was prepared to put that in. This ark in which was put this law was set up in the holiest, and the mercy-seat was set above it, for so was Moses commanded to place them. Thou shalt make an ark, saith God, 'and thou shalt make a mercy-seat': the ark shall be called the ark of the testimony, and there 'thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee,' that is, the law, 'and thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark, and there I will meet with thee, from above the mercy-seat between the two cherubims, which are upon,' that is, above, 'the ark of the testimony,' 'shadowing the mercy-seat' (Exo 25:16–22; Heb 9:5).

Thus, then, were things of old ordained in the type, by which we gather what is now to be minded in our worshipping of God. There was an ark made, and the two tables of stone, in which the law was writ, was put therein (Deut 10:2–5). This ark, with these two tables, were put into the holiest, and this mercy-seat was set above it. The Holy Ghost, in my mind, thus signifying that grace sits upon a throne that is higher than the law, above the law; and that grace, therefore, is to rule before the law, and notwithstanding all the sentence of the law; for it sitteth, I say, upon a throne, but the law sits on none; a throne, I say, which the law, instead of accusing, justifieth and approveth. For although it condemneth all men, yet it excepteth Christ, who, in his manhood, is this throne of grace. Him, I say, it

condemneth not, but approveth, and liketh well of all his doings; yea, it granteth him, as here we see, as a throne of grace, to be exalted above itself: yea, it cannot but so do, because by wisdom and holiness itself, which is also the Lord of the law, it is appointed so to do. Here, then, is the throne of God, the throne of grace, namely, above the ark of the testimony; on this God and his grace sits, reigns, and gives leave to sinners to approach his presence for grace and mercy. He gives, I say for those sinners so to do, that have washed before in the brazen laver that is prepared to wash in first, of which we may speak more anon. Now, behold the wisdom of God in his thus ordaining of things; in his placing, in the first place, the law, and Christ the ark of the testimony, and the mercy-seat, or throne of grace, so nigh together; for doubtless it was wisdom that thus ordained them, and it might so ordain for these reasons—

Why the law and the mercy-seat are so near together

1. That we that approach the throne of grace might, when we come there, be made still to remember that we are sinners—'for by the law is the knowledge of sin' (Rom 3:20)—and behold just before us is this ark in which are the two tables that condemn all flesh: yea, we must look that way, if we look at all; for just above it is the mercy-seat or throne of grace. So then here is a memento for them that come to God, and to his throne of grace, for mercy, to wit, the law, by which they are afresh put in remembrance of themselves, their sins, and what need they have of fresh supplies of grace. I read that the laver of brass and the foot of it was made of the looking-glasses of the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle (Exo 38:8), methinks to signify, that men might see their smyrches when they came to wash; so here you see the law is placed even with the mercy-seat, only that

stood above, whereby those that come to the throne of grace for mercy might also yet more be put in mind that they are sinners.

2. This also tendeth to set an edge upon prayer, and to make us the more fervent in spirit when we come to the throne of grace. Should a king ordain that the axe and halter should be before all those that supplicate him for mercy, it would put yet an edge upon all their petitions for his grace, and make them yet the more humbly and fervently implore his majesty for favour. But, behold, the mercy-seat stands above, is set up above the ark and testimony that is in it. Here, therefore, we have encouragement to look for good. For observe, though here is the law, and that too in the holiest of all, whither we go; yet above it is the mercy-seat and throne of grace triumphant, unto which we should look, and to which we should direct our prayers. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, notwithstanding the ark and testimony is by; for the law cannot hurt us when grace is so nigh; besides, God is now not in the law, but upon the throne of grace that is above it, to give forth pardons, and grace, and helps at a time of need.

This, then, may serve to inform some whereabout they are, when they are in their closets, and at prayer. Art thou most dejected when thou art at prayer? Hear me, thou art not far from the throne of grace; for thy dejection proceedeth from thy looking into the ark, into which God hath ordained that whosoever looks shall die (1 Sam 6:19). Now if thou art indeed so near as to see thy sins, by thy reading of thyself by the tables in the ark, cast but up thine eyes a little higher, and behold, there is the mercy-seat and throne of grace to which thou wouldest come, and by which thou must be saved. When David came to pray to God, he said he would direct his prayer to God, and would look up (Psa 5:3). As who should say, When I pray, I will say to my prayers, O my prayers, mount up, stay not at

the ark of the testimony, for there is the law and condemnation; but soar aloft to the throne that stands above, for there is God, and there is grace displayed, and there thou mayest obtain what is necessary to help in time of need. Some, indeed, there be that know not what these things mean; they never read their sin nor condemnation for it; when they are upon their knees at their devotion, and so are neither dejected at the sight of what they are, nor driven with sense of things to look higher for help at need; for need, indeed, they see none. Of such I shall say, they are not concerned in our text, nor can they come hither before they have been prepared so to do, as may appear before we come to an end.

How the godly distinguish the throne of grace

SECOND. And thus have I showed you what this throne of grace is, and where it stands. And now I shall come to show you how you shall find it, and know when you are come to it, by several other things.

First, then, about the throne of grace there is 'a rainbow-in sight like unto an emerald' (Rev 4:1–3). This was the first sight that John saw after he had received his epistles for the seven churches. Before he received them, he had the great vision of his Lord, and heard him say to him, I am he that was dead and am alive, or 'that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, amen; and have the keys of hell and of death' (Rev 1:18). And a good preparation it was for a work of that nature that now he was called unto; to wit, that he might the more warmly, and affectionately, and confidently attest the truth which his Lord had now for him to testify to them. So here, before he entereth upon his prophecy of things to come, he hears a first voice, and sees a first sight. The first voice that he heard was, 'Come up

hither,' and the first sight that he saw was a throne with a rainbow round about it. 'And immediately,' saith he, 'I was in the Spirit; and behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper, and a sardine stone, and there was a rainbow round about the throne' (Rev 4:1–3).

The first time that we find in God's Word mention made of a rainbow, we read also of its spiritual signification, to wit, that it was a token of the firmness of the covenant that God made with Noah, as touching his not drowning the earth any more with the waters of a flood. 'I do set,' saith he, 'my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud. And I will remember my covenant which is between me and you, and every living creature of all flesh: and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh' (Gen 9:13–15). The first use, therefore, of the rainbow, it was to be a token of a covenant of mercy and kindness to the world; but that was not the utmost end thereof. For that covenant was but a shadow of the covenant of grace which God hath made with his elect in Christ, and that bow but a shadow of the token of the permanency and lastingness of that covenant. Wherefore the next time we read of the rainbow is in the first of Ezekiel, and there we read of it only with reference to the excellencies of its colour; for that it is there said to be exactly like the colour of the glory of the man that the prophet there saw as sitting upon a throne (v 28). The glory, that is, the priestly robes; for he is a priest upon the throne, and his robes become his glory and beauty (Zech 6:13). His robes-what are they but his blessed righteousness, with the skirts of which he covereth the sinful nakedness of his people, and with the perfection of which he decketh and adorneth them, 'as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels' (Exo 28:2; Eze 16:8; Isa 61:10).

Now here again, in the third place, we find a rainbow, a rainbow round about the throne; round about the throne of grace. A rainbow—that is, a token of the covenant, a token of the covenant of grace in its lastingness; and that token is the appearance of the man Christ. The appearance—that is, his robes, his righteousness, 'from the appearance of his loins even upward,' and 'from the appearance of his loins even downward' (Eze 1:27); even down to the foot, as you have it in the book of the Revelation (1:13). 'As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord' (Eze 1:28). The sum then is, that by the rainbow round about the throne of grace upon which God sitteth to hear and answer the petitions of his people, we are to understand the obediential righteousness of Jesus Christ, which in the days of his flesh he wrought out and accomplished for his people; by which God's justice is satisfied, and their person justified, and they so made acceptable to him. This righteousness, that shines in God's eyes more glorious than the rainbow in the cloud doth in ours, saith John, is round about the throne. But for what purpose? Why, to be looked upon. But who must look upon it? Why, God and his people; the people when they come to pray, and God when he is about to hear and give. 'And the bow shall be in the cloud'; says God, 'and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth' (Gen 9:16). And, I say, as the bow is for God to look on, so it is also for our sight to behold. A rainbow round about the throne, in sight; in whose sight? in John's and his companions, like unto an emerald.

We read of Solomon's great throne of ivory, that though there was not its like in any kingdom, yet he was not willing that the bow of it should stand before him. It was round behind (1 Kings 10:18–20). O! but God's throne has the bow before, even round about to view, to

look upon in sight. Solomon's was but a shadow, and therefore fit to be put behind; but this is the sum and substance, and therefore fit to be before, in view, in sight, for God and his people to behold. Thus you see that a rainbow is round about the throne of grace, and what this rainbow is. Look then, when thou goest to prayer, for the throne; and that thou mayest not be deceived with a fancy, look for the rainbow too. The rainbow, that is, as I have said, the personal performances of Christ thy Saviour for thee. Look, I say, for that, it is his righteousness; the token of the everlastingness of the covenant of grace; the object of God's delight, and must be the matter of the justification of thy person and performances before God. God looks at it, look thou at it, and at it only (Psa 71:16). For in heaven or earth, if that be cast away, there is nothing to be found that can please God, or justify thee. If it be said faith pleases God; I answer, faith is a relative grace; take then the relative away, which, as to justification, is this spangling robe, this rainbow, this righteousness of Christ, and faith dies, and becomes, as to what we now treat of, extinct and quenched as tow.

And a very fit emblem the rainbow is of the righteousness of Christ; and that in these particulars. 1. The rainbow is an effect of the sun that shines in the firmament; and the righteousness by which this throne of grace is encompassed, is the work of the Son of God. 2. The rainbow was a token that the wrath of God in sending the flood was appeased; this righteousness of Christ is that for the sake of which God forgiveth us all trespasses. 3. The rainbow was set in the cloud, that the sinful man might look thereon, and wax confident in common mercy; this righteousness is showed us in the word, that we may by it believe unto special mercy. 4. The bow is seen but now and then in the cloud; Christ's righteousness is but here and there revealed in the Word. 5. The bow is seen commonly upon, or after rain; Christ's righteousness is apprehended by faith upon, or soon

after the apprehensions of wrath. 6. The bow is seen sometimes more, sometimes less; and so is this righteousness, even according to the degree or clearness of the sight of faith. 7. The bow is of that nature, as to make whatever you shall look upon through it, to be of the same colour of itself, whether that thing be bush, or man, or beast; and the righteousness of Christ is that that makes sinners, when God looks upon them through it, to look beautiful, and acceptable in his sight, for we are made comely through his comeliness, and made accepted in the Beloved (Eze 16:14; Eph 1:6).

One word more of the rainbow, and then to some other things. As here you read that the rainbow is round about the throne; so if you read on even in the same place, you shall find the glorious effects thereof to be far more than all that I have said. But,

Second. As the throne of grace is known by the rainbow that is round about it; so also thou shalt know it by this, the high priest is continually ministering before it; the high priest, or Christ as priest, is there before God in his high priest's robes, making continual intercession for thy acceptance there. Now, as I said before, Christ is priest and throne and all; throne in one sense, priest in another; even as he was priest, and sacrifice, and altar too, when he became our reconciler to God.

As a priest here, he is put under the notion of an angel, of an angel that came and stood at the altar to offer incense for the church, all the time that the seven angels were to sound out with trumpets the alarm of God's wrath against the anti-christian world; lest that wrath should swallow them up also. 'And,' saith John, 'another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saint upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the

smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand' (Rev 8:1–4).

Here then you have before the throne, that is, the throne or mercy-seat, the high priest; for there it was that God appointed that the altar of incense, or that to burn incense on, should be placed (Exo 30:1–7). This incense-altar in the type was to be overlaid with gold; but here the Holy Ghost implies, that it is all of gold. This throne then is the mercy-seat, or throne of grace, to which we are bid to come; and, as you see, here is the angel, the high priest with his golden censer, and his incense, ready to wait upon us. For so the text implies, for he is there to offer his incense with the prayers of all saints that are waiting without at his time of offering incense within (Luke 1:10). So, then, at the throne of grace, or before it, stands the high priest of our propitiation, Christ Jesus, with his golden censer in his hand, full of incense, therewith to perfume the prayers of saints, that come thither for grace and mercy to help in time of need. And he stands there, as you see, under the name of an angel, for he is the angel of God's presence, and messenger of his covenant.

But now it is worth our considering, to take notice how, or in what method, the high priest under the law was to approach the incense-altar. When he came to make intercession for the saints before the throne, he was to go in thither to do this work in his robes and ornaments; not without them, lest he died. The principal of these ornaments were, 'a breast-plate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a brodered coat, a mitre, and a girdle' (Exo 28:4). These are briefly called his garments, in Revelation the first, and in the general they show us, that he is clothed with righteousness, girded with truth and faithfulness, for that is the girdle of his reins to strengthen him (Isa 11:5). And that he beareth upon his heart the names of the children of Israel that are Israelites indeed; for as on Aaron's breast-plate was

fixed the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, and he was to bear the weight of them by the strength of his shoulders, so are we on the heart of Christ (Isa 22:21).

Thus therefore is our high priest within the holiest to offer incense upon the golden altar of incense, that is, before the throne. Wherefore, when thou goest thither, even to 'the throne of grace,' look for him, and be not content, though thou shouldst find God there, if thou findest him not there, I suppose now an impossibility, for edification's sake, for without him nothing can be done; I say, without him as a priest. He is the throne, and without him as a throne, God has no resting-place as to us; he is a priest, and without him as such we can make no acceptable approach to God; for by him as priest our spiritual sacrifices are accepted (1 Peter 2:5). 'By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually,—giving thanks,' and confessing to and 'in his name' (Heb 13:15). And for our further edification herein, let us consider, that as God has chosen and made him his throne of grace; so he has sworn, that he shall be accepted as a priest for ever there. For his natural qualifications we may speak something to them afterwards; in the meantime know, that there is no coming to God, upon pain of death without him.

Nor will it out of my mind, but that his wearing the rainbow upon his head doth somewhat belong to him as priest, his priestly vestments being for glory and beauty, as afore was said, compared to the colour of it (Rev 10:1; Eze 1). But why doth he wear the rainbow upon his head; but to show, that the sign, that the everlastingness of the covenant of grace is only to be found in him; that he wears it as a mitre or frontlet of gold, and can always plead it with acceptance to God, and for the subduing of the world and good of his people. But,

Thirdly, The throne of grace is to be known by the sacrifice that is presented there. The high priest was not to go into the holiest, nor come near the mercy-seat; the which, as I have showed you, was a type of our throne of grace, 'without blood.' 'But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people' (Heb 9:7). Yea, the priest was to take of the blood of his sacrifice, and sprinkle it seven times before the Lord, that is, before the mercy-seat, or throne of grace; and was to put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of incense before the Lord (Lev 4:5–7, 16:13–15). So then the throne of grace is known by the blood that is sprinkled thereon, and by the atonement that by it is made there. I told you before that before the throne of grace there is our high-priest; and now I tell you, there is his sacrifice too; his sacrifice which he there presenteth as amends for the sins of all such as have a right to come with boldness to the throne of grace. Hence, as I mentioned before, there is said to be in the midst of the throne, the same throne of which we have spoken before, 'a lamb as it had been slain' (Rev 5:6). The words are to the purpose, and signify that in the midst of the throne is our sacrifice, with the very marks of his death upon him; showing to God that sitteth upon the throne, the holes of the thorns, of the nails, of the spear; and how he was disfigured with blows and blood when at his command he gave himself a ransom for his people; for it cannot be imagined that either the exaltation or glorification of the body of Jesus Christ should make him forget the day in which he died the death for our sins; specially since that which puts worth into his whole intercession is the death he died, and the blood he shed upon the cross, for our trespasses.

Besides, there is no sight more taketh the heart of God, than to see of the travail of the soul, and the bruising of the body of his Son for our transgressions. Hence it is said, He 'is in the midst of the throne' as

he died, or as he had been slain (Rev 7:17). It is said again, 'The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them.' The Lamb, that is, the Son of God as a sacrifice, shall be always in the midst of the throne to feed and comfort his people. He is the throne, he is the priest, he is the sacrifice. But then how as a Lamb is he in the midst of the throne? Why, the meaning in mine opinion is, that Christ, as a dying and bleeding sacrifice, shall be chief in the reconciling of us to God; or that his being offered for our sins shall be of great virtue when pleaded by him as priest, to the obtaining of grace, mercy, and glory for us (Heb 9:12). By his blood he entered into the holy place; by his blood he hath made an atonement for us before the mercy-seat. His blood it is that speaketh better for us than the blood of Abel did for Cain (Heb 12:24). Also it is by his blood that we have bold admittance into the holiest (Heb 10:19). Wherefore no marvel if you find him here a Lamb, as it had been slain, and that in the midst of the throne of grace.

While thou art therefore thinking on him, as he is the throne of grace, forget him not as he is priest and sacrifice; for as a priest he makes atonement; but there is no atonement made for sin without a sacrifice. Now, as Christ is a sacrifice, so he is to be considered as passive, or a sufferer; as he is a priest, so he is active, or one that hath offered up himself; as he is an altar, so he is to be considered as God; for in and upon the power of his Godhead he offered up himself. The altar then was not the cross, as some have foolishly imagined. But as a throne, a throne of grace; so he is to be considered as distinct from these three things, as I also have hinted before. Wouldst thou then know this throne of grace, where God sits to hear prayers and give grace? then cast the eyes of thy soul about, and look till thou findest the Lamb there; a Lamb there 'as it had been slain,' for by this thou shalt know thou art right. A slain Lamb, or a Lamb as it had been slain, when it is seen by a suppliant in the midst of the

throne, whither he is come for grace, is a blessed sight! A blessed sight indeed! And it informs him he is where he should be.

And thou must look for this, the rather because without blood is no remission. He that thinks to find grace at God's hand, and yet enters not into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, will find himself mistaken, and will find a DEAD, instead of 'a living way' (Heb 10:19). For if not anything below, or besides blood, can yield remission on God's part, how should remission be received by us without our acting faith therein? We are justified by his blood, through faith in his blood (Rom 5:6–9). Wherefore, I say, look when thou approachest the throne of grace, that thou give diligence to see for the Lamb; that is, 'as it had been slain' in the midst of the throne of grace; and then thou wilt have, not only a sign that thou presentest thy supplications to God, where, and as thou shouldst; but there also wilt thou meet with matter to break, to soften, to bend, to bow, and to make thy heart as thou wouldst have it; for if the blood of a goat will, as some say, dissolve an adamant, a stone that is harder than flint; shall not the sight of 'a Lamb as it had been slain' much more dissolve and melt down the spirit of that man that is upon his knees before the throne of grace for mercy; especially when he shall see, that not his prayers, not his tears, not his wants, but the blood of the Lamb, has prevailed with a God of grace to give mercy and grace to an undeserving man? This then is the third sign by which thou shalt know when thou art at the throne of grace: that throne is sprinkled with blood; yea, in the midst of that throne there is to be seen to this day, a Lamb as it had been slain; and he is in the midst of it, to feed those that come to that throne, and to lead them by and to 'living fountains of waters' (Rev 7:17). Wherefore,

Fourth. The throne of grace is to be known, by the streams of grace that continually proceed therefrom, and that like a river run

themselves out into the world. And, saith John, 'He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb' (Rev 22:1). Mark you, here is again a throne; the throne of God, which, as we have showed, is the human nature of his Son; out of which, as you read, proceeds a river, a river of water of life, clear as crystal. And the joining of the Lamb also here with God is to show that it comes, I say, from God, by the Lamb; by Christ, who as a lamb or sacrifice for sin, is the procuring cause of the running of this river; it proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. Behold, therefore, how carefully here the Lamb is brought in, as one from or through whom proceeds the water of life to us. God is the spring-head; Christ the golden pipe of conveyance; the elect the receivers of this water of life. He saith not here, 'the throne of the Lamb,' but 'and of the Lamb, to show, I say, that he it is out of or through whom this river of grace should come.' But and if it should be understood that it proceedeth from the throne of the Lamb, it may be to show that Christ also has power as a mediator, to send grace like a river into the church. And then it amounts to this, that God, for Christ's sake, gives this river of grace, and that Christ, for his merits sake, has power to do so too. And hence is that good wish, so often mentioned in the epistles, 'Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Thess 1:2; Phile 3). And again, 'Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Peter 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4). For Christ has power with the Father to give grace and forgiveness of sins to men (John 5:21–26; Mark 2:10). But let us come to the terms in this text. Here we have a throne, a throne of grace; and to show that this throne is it indeed, therefore there proceeds therefrom a river of this grace, put here under the term of 'water of life,' a term fit to express both the nature of grace and the condition of him that comes for it to the throne of grace.

It is called by the name of water of life, to show what a reviving cordial the grace of God in Christ is, shall be, and will be found to be, of all those that by him shall drink thereof. It shall be in him, even in him that drinks it, 'a well of water springing up into everlasting life' (John 4:14). It will therefore beget life, and maintain it; yea, will itself be a spring of life, in the very heart of him that drinks it. Ah! it will be such a preservative also to spiritual health, as that by its virtue the soul shall for ever be kept, I say, the soul that drinks it, from total and final decay; it shall be in them a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life.

But there is also by this phrase or term briefly touched the present state of them that shall come hither to drink; they are not the healthful, but the sick. It is with the throne of grace, as it is with the Bath, and other places of sovereign and healing waters, they are most coveted of them that are diseased, and do also show their virtues on those that have their health and limbs; so, I say, is the throne of grace; its waters are for healing, for soul-healing, that is their virtue (Eze 47:8, 9). Wherefore, as at those waters above mentioned, the lame leave their crutches, and the sick [obtain] such signs of their recovery as may be a sign of their receiving health and cure there; so at the throne of grace, it is where true penitents, and those that are sick for mercy, do leave their sighs and tears; 'and the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall,' there, 'wipe away all tears from their eyes' (Rev 7:17). Wherefore, as Joseph washed his face, and dried his tears away, when he saw his brother Benjamin, so all God's saints shall here, even at the throne of grace, where God's Benjamin, or the Son of his right hand, is, wash their souls from sorrow, and have their tears wiped from their eyes. Wherefore, O thou that are diseased, afflicted, and that wouldst live, come by Jesus to God as merciful and gracious; yea, look for this river when thou

art upon thy knees before him, for by that thou shalt find whereabout is the throne of grace, and so where thou mayest find mercy.

But again, as that which proceeds out of this throne of grace is called 'water of life,' so it is said to be a river, a river of water of life. This, in the first place, shows, that with God is plenty of grace, even as in a river there is plenty of water; a pond, a pool, a cistern, will hold much, but a river will hold more; from this throne come rivers and streams of water of life, to satisfy those that come for life to the throne of God. Further, as by a river is showed what abundance of grace proceeds from God through Christ, so it shows the unsatiable thirst and desire of one that comes indeed aright to the throne of grace for mercy. Nothing but rivers will satisfy such a soul; ponds, pools, and cisterns, will do nothing: such an one is like him of whom it is said, 'Behold he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not; he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth' (Job 40:23). This David testifies when he saith, 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God' (Psa 42:1). Hence the invitation is proportionable, 'Drink abundantly' (Cant 5:1), and that they that are saved, are saved to receive abundance of grace; 'they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ' (Rom 5:17). And hence it is said again, 'When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.' But, Lord, how wilt thou quench their boundless thirst? 'I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water' (Isa 41:17, 18). Behold here is a pool of water as big as a wilderness, enough one would think to satisfy any thirsty soul. O, but that will not do! wherefore he will open rivers, fountains, and springs, and all this is to quench the drought of one that thirsteth for the grace of God, that they have

enough. 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures, for with thee is the fountain of life'; &c. (Psa 36:8, 9).

This abundance the throne of grace yieldeth for the help and health of such as would have the water of life to drink, and to cure their diseases withal: it yields a river of water of life. Moreover, since grace is said here to proceed as a river from the throne of God and of the Lamb, it is to show the commonness of it; rivers you know are common in the stream, however they are at the head (Judg 5). And to show the commonness of it, the apostle calls it 'the common salvation'; and it is said in Ezekiel and Zecharias, to go forth to the desert, and into the sea, the world, to heal the beasts and fish of all kinds that are there (Eze 47:8; Zech 14:8). This, therefore, is a text that shows us what it is to come to a throne, where the token of the covenant of grace is, where the high priest ministereth, and in the midst of which there is a Lamb, 'as it had been slain': for from thence there cometh not drops, nor showers, but rivers of the grace of God, a river of water of life.

Again, as the grace that we here read of is said, as it comes from this throne, to come as a river of water of life; so it is said to be pure and clear as crystal. Pure is set in opposition to muddy and dirty waters, and clear is set in opposition to those waters that are black, by reason of the cold and icyish nature of them; therefore there is conjoined to this phrase the word crystal, which all know is a clear and shining stone (Eze 34:19; Job 6:15, 16). Indeed the life and spirit that is in this water, will keep it from looking black and dull; and the throne from whence it comes will keep it from being muddy, so much as in the streams thereof. 'The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it' (Prov 10:22). Indeed, all the sorrow that is mixed with our Christianity, it proceedeth, as the procuring cause,

from ourselves, not from the throne of grace; for that is the place where our tears, as was showed you, are wiped away; and also where we hang up our crutches. The streams thereof are pure and clear, not muddy nor frozen, but warm and delightful, and that 'make glad the city of God' (Psa 46).

These words also show us, that this water of itself can do without a mixture of anything of ours. What comes from this throne of grace is pure grace, and nothing else; clear grace, free grace, grace that is not mixed, nor need be mixed with works of righteousness which we have done; it is of itself sufficient to answer all our wants, to heal all our diseases, and to help us at a time of need. It is grace that chooses, it is grace that calleth, it is grace that preserveth, and it is grace that brings to glory: even the grace that like a river of water of life proceedeth from this throne. And hence it is, that from first to last, we must cry, 'Grace, grace unto it!'

Thus you see what a throne the Christian is invited to; it is a throne of grace whereon doth sit the God of all grace; it is a throne of grace before which the Lord Jesus ministereth continually for us; it is a throne of grace sprinkled with the blood, and in the midst of which is a Lamb as it had been slain; it is a throne with a rainbow round about it, which is the token of the everlasting covenant, and out of which proceeds, as here you read, a river, a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal. Look then for these signs of the throne of grace, all you that would come to it, and rest not, until by some of them you know that you are even come to it; they are all to be seen have you but eyes; and the sight of them is very delectable, and has a natural tendency in them, when seen, to revive and quicken the soul. But,

Fifth. As the throne of grace is known and distinguished by the things above named, so it is by the effects which these things have

wrought. There is about that throne 'four and twenty seats, and upon the seats four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they have on their heads crowns of gold' (Rev 4:4). There is no throne that has these signs and effects belonging to it but this; wherefore, as by these signs, so by the effects of them also, one may know which is, and so when he is indeed come to the throne of grace. And a little as we commented upon what went before, we will also touch upon this.

1. By seats, I understand places of rest and dignity; places of rest, for that they that sit on them do rest from their labours; and places of dignity, for that they are about the throne (Rev 14:13). 'And the four and twenty elders which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces and worshipped God' (Rev 11:16). And forasmuch as the seats are mentioned, before they are mentioned that sat thereon, it is to show, that the places were prepared before they were converted.

2. The elders, I take to be the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles, or the first fathers of the churches; for they are the elders of both the churches, that is, both of the Jewish and Gentile church of God; they are the ancients, as also they are called in the prophet Isaiah, which are in some sense the fathers of both these churches (Isa 24:23). These elders are well set forth by that four and twenty that you read of in the book of Chronicles, who had every one of them for sons twelve in number. There therefore the four and twenty are (1 Chron 25:8–31).

3. Their sitting denoteth also their abiding in the presence of God. 'Sit thou at my right hand,' was the Father's word to the Son, and also signifieth the same (Psa 110:1). It is then the throne of grace where the four and twenty seats are, and before which the four and twenty elders sit.

4. Their white robes are Christ's righteousness, their own good works and glory; not that their works brought them thither, for they were of themselves polluted, and were washed white in the blood of the Lamb; but yet God will have all that his people have done in love to him to be rewarded. Yea, and they shall wear their own labours, being washed as afore is hinted, as a badge of their honour before the throne of grace, and this is grace indeed. 'They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, therefore are they before the throne of God' (Rev 7:14, 15). They have washed as others did do before them.

5. 'And they had on their heads crowns of gold' (Rev 4:4). This denotes their victory, and also that they are kings, and as kings shall reign with him for ever and ever (Rev 5:10).

6. But what! were they silent? did they say, did they do nothing while they sat before the throne? Yes, they were appointed to be singers there. This was signified by the four and twenty that we made mention of before, who with their sons were instructed in the songs of the Lord, and all that were cunning to do so then, were two hundred fourscore and eight (1 Chron 25:7). These were the figure of that hundred forty and four thousand redeemed from the earth. For as the first four and twenty, and their sons, are said to sing and to play upon cymbals, psalteries, and harps; and as they are there said to be instructed and cunning in the songs of the Lord; so these that sit before the throne are said also to sing with harps in their hands their song before the throne; and such song it was, and so cunningly did they sing it, that 'no man could learn it, but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth' (Rev 14:3).

Now, as I said, as he at first began with four and twenty in David, and ended with four and twenty times twelve, so here in John he begins with the same number, but ends with such a company that no man could number. For, he saith, 'After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and the elders, and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God' (Rev 7:9–11). This numberless number seems to have got the song by the end; for they cry aloud, 'Salvation, salvation to our God and to the Lamb'; which to be sure is such a song that none can learn but them that are redeemed from the earth.

But I say, what a brave encouragement is it for one that is come for grace to the throne of grace, to see so great a number already there, on their seats, in their robes, with their palms in their hands, and their crowns upon their heads, singing of salvation to God, and to the Lamb! And I say again, and speak now to the dejected, methinks it would be strange, O thou that art so afraid that the greatness of thy sins will be a bar unto thee, if amongst all this great number of pipers and harpers that are got to glory, thou canst not espy one that when here was as vile a sinner as thyself. Look man, they are there for thee to view them, and for thee to take encouragement to hope, when thou shalt consider what grace and mercy has done for them. Look again, I say, now thou art upon thy knees, and see if some that are among them have not done worse than thou hast done. And yet behold, they are set down; and yet behold they have their crowns on their heads, their harps in their hands, and sing aloud of salvation to their God, and to the Lamb.

This then is a fifth note or sign that doth distinguish the throne of grace from other thrones. There are, before that, to be seen, for our encouragement, a numberless number of people sitting and singing round about it. Singing, I say, to God for his grace, and to the Lamb for his blood, by which they are secured from the wrath to come. 'And the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints, and they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God, kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth' (Rev 5:8–10). Behold, tempted soul, dost thou not yet see what a throne of grace here is, and what multitudes are already arrived thither, to give thanks unto his name that sits thereon, and to the Lamb for ever and ever? And wilt thou hang thy harp upon the willows, and go drooping up and down the world, as if there was no God, no grace, no throne of grace, to apply thyself unto, for mercy and grace to help in time of need? Hark! dost thou not hear them what they say, 'Worthy,' say they, 'is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven,' where they are, 'and on the earth,' where thou art, 'and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever' (Rev 5:12, 13).

All this is written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope; and that the drooping ones might come boldly to the throne of grace, to obtain grace and find mercy to help in time of need. They bless, they all bless; they thank, they all thank; and wilt thou hold thy tongue? 'They have all

received of his fulness, and grace for grace'; and will he shut thee out? Or is his grace so far gone, and so near spent, that now he has not enough to pardon, and secure, and save one sinner more? For shame, leave off this unbelief! Wherefore, dost thou think, art thou told of all this, but to encourage thee to come to the throne of grace? And wilt thou hang back or be sullen, because thou art none of the first? since he hath said, 'The first shall be last, and the last first.' Behold the legions, the thousands, the untold and numberless number that stand before the throne, and be bold to hope in his mercy.

Sixth. [The throne of grace is known by what proceeds from it.] As the throne of grace is distinguished from other thrones by these, so 'out of this throne proceeds lightnings, and thunderings, and voices.' Also before this throne are 'seven lamps of fire burning, which are the seven spirits of God' (Rev 4:5). This then is another thing by which the throne of grace may be known as an effect of what is before. So again, chapter the eighth, it is said, that from the altar of incense that stood before the throne, 'there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake' (Rev 8:5). All these then come out of the holiest, where the throne is, and are inflamed by this throne, and by him that sits thereon.

1. Lightnings here are to be taken for the illuminations of the Spirit in the gospel (Heb 10:32). As it is said in the book of Psalms, 'They looked unto him,' on the throne, 'and were lightened' (Psa 34:5). Or, as it is said in other places, 'The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven, the lightnings lightened the world' (Psa 77:18). And again, 'His lightnings enlightened the world, the earth saw and trembled' (Psa 97:4). This lightning therefore communicates light to them that sit in darkness. 'God,' saith the apostle, 'who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of

the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Cor 4:6). It was from this throne that the light came that struck Paul off his horse, when he went to destroy it and the people that professed it (Acts 9:3). These are those lightnings by which sinners are made to see their sad condition, and by which they are made to see the way out of it. Art thou then made to see thy condition how bad it is, and that the way out of it is by Jesus Christ? for, as I said, he is the throne of grace. Why then, come orderly in the light of these convictions to the throne from whence thy light did come, and cry there, as Samuel did to Eli, 'Here am I, for thou has called me' (1 Sam 3:8). Thus did Saul by the light that made him see; by it he came to Christ, and cried, 'Who art thou, Lord?' and, 'What wouldst thou have me do?' (Acts 9:5, 6). And is it not an encouragement to thee to come to him, when he lights thy candle that thou mightest see the way; yea, when he doth it on purpose that thou mightest come to him? 'He gives light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death,' what to do? 'to guide our feet into the way of peace' (Luke 1:79). This interpretation of this place seems to me most to cohere with what went before; for first you have here a throne, and one sitting on it; then you have the elders, and in them presented to you the whole church, sitting round about the throne; then you have in the words last read unto you, a discourse how they came thither, and that is, by the lightnings, thunderings, and voices that proceed out of the throne.

2. As you have here lightnings, so thereto is adjoined thunders. There proceeded out of this throne lightnings and thunders. By thunders, I understand that powerful discovery of the majesty of God by the word of truth, which seizeth the heart with a reverential dread and awe of him: hence it is said, 'The voice of the Lord is full of majesty; the voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars' (Psa 29:5). The voice, that is, his thundering voice. 'Canst thou thunder with a voice like him?'

(Job 40:9). And 'the thunder of his power who can understand?' (Job 26:14). It was upon this account that Peter, and James, and John, were called 'the sons of thunder,' because, in the word which they were to preach, there was to be not only lightnings, but thunders; not only illuminations, but a great seizing of the heart, with the dread and majesty of God, to the effectual turning of the sinner to him (Mark 3:16, 17).

Lightnings without thunder are in this case dangerous, because they that receive the one without the other are subject to miscarry. They were 'once enlightened,' but you read of no thunder they had; and they were subject to fall into an irrecoverable state (Heb 6:4–6). Saul had thunder with his lightnings to the shaking of his soul; so had the three thousand; so had the jailor (Acts 2, 9, 16). They that receive light without thunder are subject to turn the grace of God into wantonness; but they that know the terror of God will persuade men (Rom 3:8; Jude 4; 2 Cor 5:11). So then, when he decrees to give the rain of his grace to a man, he makes 'a way for the lighting of the thunder,' not the one without the other, but the one following the other (Job 28:26). Lightning and thunder is made a cause of rain, but lightning alone is not: 'Who hath divided a water-course for the overflowing of waters? or a way for the lightning of thunder to cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is: on the wilderness wherein there is no man?' (Job 38:25, 26).

Thus therefore you may see how in the darkest sayings of the Holy Ghost there is as great an harmony with truth as in the most plain and easy; there must be thunder with light, if thy heart be well poised and balanced with the fear of God: we have had great lightnings in this land of late years, but little thunders; and that is one reason why so little grace is found where light is, and why so many professors run on their heads in such a day as this is, notwithstanding all they

have seen. Well then, this also should be a help to a soul to come to the throne of grace; the God of glory has thundered, has thundered to awaken thee, as well as sent lightnings to give thee light; to awaken thee to a coming to him, as well as to the enabling of thee to see his things; this then has come from the throne of grace to make thee come hither; wherefore observe, where it is by these signs made mention of before, and by these effects; and go, and come to the throne of grace.

3. As there proceeds from this throne lightnings and thunders, so from hence it is said voices proceed also: now these voices may be taken for such as are sent with this lightning and thunder to instruct, or for such [instruction] as this lightning and thunder begets in our hearts.

(1.) It may be taken in the first sense for light and dread, when it falleth from God into the soul, is attended with a voice or voices of instruction to the soul, to know what to do (Acts 2:3–7). This it was in Paul's case. He had light and dread, and voices for his instruction; he had lightnings, and thunderings, and voices: 'Good and upright is the Lord; therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek will he teach his way' (Psa 25:8, 9).

(2.) Or by voices you may understand, such as the lightning and thunder begets in our hearts: for though man is as mute as a fish to Godward, before this thunder and lightning comes to him, yet after that he is full of voices (2 Cor 4:13, 7:14). And how much more numerous are the voices that in the whole church on earth are begot by these lightnings and thunders that proceed from the throne of grace; their faith has a voice, their repentance has a voice, their subjection to God's word has a voice in it; yea, there is a voice in their prayers, a voice in their cry, a voice in their tears, a voice in their

groans, in their roarings, in their bemoaning of themselves, and in their triumphs! (1 Thess 1:2–8; Psa 5:3, 7:17, 20:2–5, 22:1, 138:5; Jer 31:18).

This then is an effect of the throne of grace; hence it is said that they proceed from it, even the lightning, and the thunder, and the voices; that is, effectual conversion to God. It follows then, that if all these are with thy soul, the operations of the throne of grace have been upon thee to bring thee to the throne of grace; first in thy prayers, and then in thy person. And this leads me to the next thing propounded to be spoken to, which is to show who are the persons invited here to come to the throne of grace. 'Let us therefore come.'

THE PERSONS INTENDED BY THIS EXHORTATION

THIRD. Now the persons here called upon to come to the throne of grace, are not all or every sort of men, but the men that may properly be comprehended under this word Us and We; 'let Us therefore come boldly, that We may obtain.' And they that are here put under these particular terms, are expressed both before and after, by those that have explication in them.

They are called [in the epistle to the Hebrews], 1. Such as give the most earnest heed to the word which they have heard (Heb 2:1). 2. They are such as see Jesus crowned with glory and honour (Heb 2:9). 3. They are called the children (Heb 2:14). 4. They are called the seed of Abraham (Heb 2:16). 5. They are called Christ's brethren (Heb 2:17).

So, chapter the third, they are called holy brethren, and said to be partakers of the heavenly calling, and the people of whom it is said

that Christ Jesus is the apostle and high priest of their profession (Heb 3:1–6). They are called Christ's own house, and are said to be partakers of Christ (Heb 3:14). They are said to be the believers, those that do enter in into rest, those that have Christ for a high priest, and with the feeling of whose infirmities he is touched and sympathiseth (Heb 4:3, 14, 15).

So, in chapter the sixth, they are called beloved, and the heirs of promise; they that have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them; they are called those that have hope as an anchor, and those for whom Christ as a forerunner hath entered and taken possession of heaven (Heb 6:9, 17–20). So, chapter the seventh, they are said to be such as draw nigh unto God (Heb 7:19). And, chapter the eighth, they are said to be such with whom the new covenant is made in Christ. Chapter the ninth, they are such for whom Christ has obtained eternal redemption, and such for whom he has entered the holy place (Heb 9:12, 22). Chapter the tenth, they are such as are said to be sanctified by the will of God, such as have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; such as draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, or that have liberty to do so, having their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and their bodies washed with pure water; they were those that had suffered much for Christ in the world, and that became companions of them that so were used (Heb 10:10, 19, 22–25). Yea, he tells them, in the eleventh chapter, that they and the patriarchs must be made perfect together (Heb 11:40). He also tells them, in the twelfth chapter, that already they are come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the New Testament, and

to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel (Heb 12:22–24).

Thus you see what terms, characters, titles, and privileges, they are invested with that are here exhorted to come to the throne of grace. From whence we may conclude that every one is not capable of coming thither, no not every one that is under convictions, and that hath a sense of the need of and a desire after the mercy of God in Christ.

The orderly coming to the throne of grace

Wherefore we will come, in the next place, to show the orderly coming of a soul to the throne of grace for mercy: and for this we must first apply ourselves to the Old Testament, where we have the shadow of what we now are about to enter upon the discourse of, and then we will come to the antitype, where yet the thing is far more explained.

First. Then, the mercy-seat was for the church, not for the world; for a Gentile could not go immediately from his natural state to the mercy-seat, by the high priest, but must first orderly join himself, or be joined, to the church, which then consisted of the body of the Jews (Exo 12:43–49). The stranger then must first be circumcised, and consequently profess faith in the Messiah to come, which was signified by his going from his circumcision directly to the passover, and so orderly to other privileges, specially to this of the mercy-seat which the high priest was to go but once a year into (Eze 44:6–9).

Second. The church is again set forth unto us by Aaron and his sons. Aaron as the head, his sons as the members; but the sons of Aaron were not to meddle with any of the things of the Holiest, until they had washed in a laver: 'And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash in; and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat. When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offerings made by fire unto the Lord. So they shall wash their hands and their feet that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever unto them, even to him, and to his seed throughout their generations.' See the margin (Exo 30:17–21, 40:30–32).

Third. Nay, so strict was this law, that if any of Israel, as well as the stranger, were defiled by any dead thing, they were to wash before they partook of the holy things, or else to abstain: but if they did not, their sin should remain upon them (Lev 17:15, 16). So again, 'the soul that hath touched any such' uncleanness 'shall be unclean until even, and shall not eat of the holy things,' much less come within the inner veil, 'unless he wash his flesh with water' (Lev 22:4–6). Now, I would ask, what all this should signify, if a sinner, as a sinner, before he washes, or is washed, may immediately go unto the throne of grace? Yea, I ask again, why the apostle supposes washing as a preparation to the Hebrews entering into the holiest, if men may go immediately from under convictions to a throne of grace? For thus, he says, 'let us draw near' 'the holiest' (Heb 12:19), 'with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water' (Heb 12:22). Let us draw near; he saith not that we may have; but having FIRST been washed and sprinkled.

The laver then must first be washed in; and he that washed not first there, has not right to come to the throne of grace; wherefore you have here also a sea of glass standing before the throne of grace, to signify this thing (Rev 4:6). It stands before the throne, for them to wash in that would indeed approach the throne of grace. For this sea of glass is the same that is shadowed forth by the laver made mention of before, and with the brazen sea that stood in Solomon's temple, whereat they were to wash before they went into the holiest. But you may ask me, What the laver or molten sea should signify to us in the New Testament? I answer, It signifieth the word of the New Testament, which containeth the cleansing doctrine of remission of sins, by the precious blood of Jesus Christ (John 15:3). Wherefore we are said to be clean through the Word, through the washing of water by the Word (Titus 3:5). The meaning then is, A man must first come to Christ, as set forth in the Word, which is this sea of glass, before he can come to Christ in heaven, as he is the throne of grace. For the Word, I say, is this sea of glass that stands before the throne, for the sinner to wash in first. Know therefore, whoever thou art, that art minded to be saved, thou must first begin with Christ crucified, and with the promise of remission of sins through his blood; which crucified Christ thou shalt not find in heaven as such; for there he is alive; but thou shalt find him in the Word; for there he is to this day set forth in all the circumstances of his death, as crucified before our eyes (Gal 3:1, 2). There thou shalt find that he died, when he died, what death he died, why he died, and the Word open to thee to come and wash in his blood. The word therefore of Christ's Testament is the laver for all New Testament priests, and every Christian is a priest to God, to wash in.

Here therefore thou must receive thy justification, and that before thou goest one step further; for if thou art not justified by his blood, thou wilt not be saved by his life. And the justifying efficacy of his

blood is left behind, and is here contained in the molten sea, or laver, or word of grace, for thee to wash in. Indeed, there is an interceding voice in his blood for us before the throne of grace, or mercy-seat; but that is still to bring us to wash, or for them that have washed therein, as it was shed upon the cross. We have boldness therefore to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, that is, by faith in his blood, as shed without the gate; for as his blood was shed without the gate, so it sanctifies the believer, and makes him capable to approach the holy of holies. Wherefore, after he had said, 'That he might sanctify the people with his own blood,' he 'suffered without the gate' (Heb 13:11–15). Let us by him therefore, that is, because we are first sanctified by faith in his blood, offer to God the sacrifice of praise continually, that is, the fruits of our lips, giving thanks in his name. Wherefore the laver of regeneration, or Christ set forth by the Word as crucified, is for all coming sinners to wash in unto justification; and the throne of grace is to be approached by saints, or as sinners justified by faith in a crucified Christ; and so, as washed from sin in the sea of his blood, to come to the mercy-seat.

And it is yet far more evident; for that those that approach this throne of grace, they must do it through believing; for, saith the apostle, 'How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed,' of whom they have not heard, and in whom they have not believed? for to that purpose runs the text (Rom 10:14). 'How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed,' antecedent to their calling on him, 'and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard' first? So then hearing goes before believing, and believing before calling upon God, as he sits on the throne of grace. Now, believing is to be according to the sound of the beginning of the gospel, which presenteth us, not first with Christ as ascended, but as Christ dying, buried, and risen. 'For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received; how that Christ died for our sins

according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures' (1 Cor 15:3, 4).

I conclude then, as to this, that the order of heaven is, that men wash in the laver of regeneration, to wit, in the blood of Christ, as held forth in the word of the truth of the gospel, which is the ordinance of God; for there sinners, as sinners, or men as unclean, may wash, in order to their approach to God as he sits upon the throne of grace.

And besides, Is it possible that a man that passeth by the doctrine of Christ as dead, should be admitted with acceptance to a just and holy God for life; or that he that slighteth and trampleth under foot the blood of Christ, as shed upon the cross, should be admitted to an interest in Christ, as he is the throne of grace? It cannot be. He must then wash there first, or die-let his profession, or pretended faith, or holiness, be what it will. For God sees iniquity in all men; nor can all the nitre or soap in the world cause that our iniquity should not be marked before God (Jer 2:22). 'For without shedding of blood is NO remission' (Heb 9:22). Nothing that polluteth, that defileth, or that is unclean, must enter into God's sanctuary; much less into the most holy part thereof, but by their sacrifice, by which they are purged, and for the sake of the perfection thereof, they believing are accepted. We have 'therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,' and no way else (Heb 10:19).

HOW WE ARE TO APPROACH THE THRONE OF GRACE

FOURTH. But this will yet be further manifest by what we have yet to say of the manner of our approach unto the throne of grace.

FIRST, then, we must approach the throne of grace by the second veil; for the throne of grace is after the second veil. So, then, though a man cometh into the tabernacle or temple, which was a figure of the church, yet if he entered but within the first veil, he only came where there was no mercy-seat or throne of grace (Heb 9:3). And what is this second veil, in, at, or through which, as the phrase is, we must, by blood, enter into the holiest? why, as to the law, the second veil did hang up between the holy and the most holy place, and it did hide what was within the holiest from the eyes or sight of those that went no further than into the first tabernacle. Now this second veil in the tabernacle or temple was a figure of the second veil that all those must go through that will approach the throne of grace; and that veil is the flesh of Christ.

This is that which the holy apostle testifies in his exhortation, where he saith, We have 'boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh' (Heb 10:19, 20). The second veil then is the flesh of Christ, the which until a man can enter or go through by his faith, it is impossible that he should come to the holiest where the throne of grace is, that is, to the heart and soul of Jesus, which is the throne. The body of Christ is the tabernacle of God, and so that in which God dwells; for the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily (Col 2:9). Therefore, as also has been hinted before, Christ Jesus is the throne of grace. Now, since his flesh is called the veil, it is evident that the glory that dwells within him, to wit, God resting in him, cannot be understood but by them that by faith can look through, or enter through, his flesh to that glory. For the glory is within the veil; there is the mercy-seat, or throne of grace; there sitteth God as delighted, as at rest, in and with sinners, that come to him by and through that flesh, and the offering of it for sin without the gate. 'I am the way,' saith Christ; but to what? and

how? (John 14:6). Why, to the Father, through my flesh. 'And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled [but how?] in the body of his flesh, [that then must be first: to what?] to present you holy and unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight' (Col 1:20–22). That is, when you enter into his presence, or approach by this flesh, the mercy-seat, or the throne of grace.

This therefore is the manner of our coming, if we come aright to the throne of grace for mercy, we must come by blood through his flesh, as through the veil; by which, until you have entered through it, the glory of God, and that he is resolved that grace shall reign, will be utterly hid from your eyes. I will not say, but by the notion of these things, men may have their whirling fancies, and may create to themselves wild notions and flattering imaginations of Christ, the throne of grace, and of glory; but the gospel knowledge of this is of absolute necessity to my right coming to the throne of grace for mercy. I must come by his blood, through his flesh, or I cannot come at all, for here is no back door. This then is the sum, Christ's body is the tabernacle, the holiest; 'thy law,' saith he, 'is within my heart,' or in the midst of my bowels (Psa 40:7, 8). In this tabernacle then God sitteth, to wit, on the heart of Christ, for that is the throne of grace. Through this tabernacle men must enter, that is, by a godly understanding of what by this tabernacle or flesh of Christ has been done to reconcile us to God that dwells in him. This is the way, all the way, for there is no way but this to come to the throne of grace. This is the new way into the heavenly paradise, for the old way is hedged and ditched up by the flaming sword of cherubims (Gen 3:24). The NEW and LIVING way, for to go the other is present death; so then, this 'new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through

the veil, that is to say, his flesh,' is the only way into the holiest, where the throne of grace is (Heb 10:20).

SECOND. We must approach this throne of grace, as having our hearts, first, sprinkled from an evil conscience. The priest that was the representator of all Israel, when he went into the holiest, was not to go in, but as sprinkled with blood first (Exo 29). Thus it is written in the law; 'not without blood'; and thus it is written in the gospel (Heb 9:7). And now since by the gospel we have all admittance to enter in through the veil, by faith, we must take heed that we enter not in without blood; for if the blood, virtually, be not seen upon us, we die, instead of obtaining mercy, and finding the help of grace. This I press the oftener, because there is nothing to which we are more naturally inclined, than to forget this. Who, that understands himself, is not sensible how apt he is to forget to act faith in the blood of Jesus, and to get his conscience sprinkled with the virtue of that, that attempteth to approach the throne of grace? Yet the scripture calls upon us to take heed that we neglect not THUS to prepare ourselves. 'Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,' to wit, with the blood of Christ, lest we die (Heb 10:22, 9:14). In the law all the people were to be sprinkled with blood, and it was necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these, that is, with the blood of bulls, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these, that is, with the offering of the body, and shedding of the blood of Christ. By this then must thou be purified and sprinkled, who by Christ wouldst approach the throne of grace.

THIRD. Therefore it is added, 'And our bodies washed with pure water.' This the apostle taketh also out of the law; where it was appointed, as was showed before. Christ also, just before he went to

the Father, gave his disciples a signification of this, saying to Peter, and by him to all the rest, 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me' (John 13:8). This pure water is nothing but the wholesome doctrine of the word mixed with Spirit, by which, as the conscience was before sprinkled with blood, the body and outward conversation is now sanctified and made clean. 'Now ye are clean through the word,' saith Christ, 'which I have spoken unto you' (John 15:3). Hence, washing, and sanctifying, and justifying, are put together, and are said to come by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor 6:11). Thou must then be washed with water, and sprinkled with blood, if thou wouldst orderly approach the throne of grace: if thou wouldst orderly approach it with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; or if thou wouldst, as the text biddeth thee here, to wit, 'come boldly unto the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'

To tell you what it is to come boldly, is one thing; and to tell you how you should come boldly, is another. Here you are bid to come boldly, and are also showed how that may be done. It may be done through the blood of sprinkling, and through the sanctifying operations of the Spirit which are here by faith to be received. And when what can be said shall be said to the utmost, there is no boldness, godly boldness, but by blood. The more the conscience is a stranger to the sprinkling of blood, the further off it is of being rightly bold with God, at the throne of grace; for it is the blood that makes the atonement, and that gives boldness to the soul (Lev 17:11; Heb 10:19). It is the blood, the power of it by faith upon the conscience, that drives away guilt, and so fear, and consequently that begetteth boldness. Wherefore, he that will be bold with God at the throne of grace, must first be well acquainted with the doctrine of the blood of Christ; namely, that it was shed, and why, and that it has made peace with God, and for whom. Yea, thou must be able by faith to bring thyself within the

number of those that are made partakers of this reconciliation, before thou canst come boldly to the throne of grace. But,

What it is to come to the throne of grace without boldness

First. There is a coming to the throne of grace before or without this boldness; but that is not the coming to which by these texts we are exhorted; yet that coming, be it never so deficient, if it is right, it is through some measure an inlet into the death and blood of Christ, and through some management, though but very little, or perhaps scarce at all discerned of the soul, to hope for grace from the throne; I say, it must arise, the encouragement must, from the cross, and from Christ as dying there. Christ himself went that way to God, and it is not possible but we must go the same way too. So, then, the encouragement, be it little, be it much—and it is little or much, even as the faith is in strength or weakness, which apprehendeth Christ—it is according to the proportion of faith; strong faith gives great boldness, weak faith doth not so, nor can it.

Second. There is a sincere coming to the throne of grace without this boldness, even a coming in the uprightness of one's heart without it. Hence a true heart and full assurance are distinguished. 'Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith' (Heb 10:22). Sincerity may be attended with a great deal of weakness, even as boldness may be attended with pride; but be it what kind of coming to the throne of grace it will, either a coming with boldness, or with that doubting which is incident to saints, still the cause of that coming, or ground thereof, is some knowledge of redemption by blood, redemption which the soul seeth it has faith in, or would see it has faith in. For Christ is precious, sometimes in the sight of the

worth, sometimes in the sight of the want, and sometimes in the sight of the enjoyment of him.

Third. There is an earnest coming to the throne of grace even with all the desire of one's soul. When David had guilt and trouble, and that so heavy that he knew not what to do, yet he could say, 'Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee' (Psa 38:1–9). He could come earnestly to the throne of grace; he could come thither with all the desire of his soul: but still this must be from that knowledge that he had of the way of remission of sins by the blood of the Son of God.

Fourth. There is also a constant coming to the throne of grace. 'Lord,' said Heman, 'I have cried day and night before thee, let my prayer come before thee, incline thine ear unto my cry, for my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave' (Psa 88:1–3). Here you see is constant crying before the throne of grace, crying night and day; and yet the man that cries seems to be in a very black cloud, and to find hard work to bear up in his soul; yet this he had, namely, the knowledge of how God was the God of salvation; yea, he called him his God as such, though with pretty much difficulty of spirit, to be sure. Wherefore it must not be concluded, that they come not at all to the throne of grace, that come not with a full assurance; or that men must forbear to come, till they come with assurance; but this I say, they come not at all aright, that take not the ground of their coming from the death and blood of Christ; and that they that come to the throne of grace, with but little knowledge of redemption by blood, will come with but little hope of obtaining grace and mercy to help in time of need.

I conclude then, that it is the privilege, the duty and glory of a man, to approach the throne of grace as a prince, as Job said, could he but

find it, he would be sure to do. 'O that I knew where I might find him!' saith he, 'that I might come even to his seat: I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments: I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me. There the righteous might dispute with him: so should I be delivered for ever from my judge' (23:3-7). Indeed, God sometimes tries us. 'He holdeth back,' sometimes, 'the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it' (Job 26:9). And this seems to be Job's case here, which made him to confess he was at a loss, and to cry out, 'O that I knew where I might find him!' And this he doth for trial, and to prove our honesty and constancy; for the hypocrite will not pray always. Will he always call upon God? No, verily; especially not when thou bindest them, afflictest them, and makest praying hard work to them (Job 36:13).

But difficulty as to finding of God's presence, and the sweet shining of the face of his throne, doth not always lie in the weakness of faith. Strong faith may be in this perplexity, and may be hard put to it to stand at times. It is said here, that God did hold back the face of his throne, and did spread a cloud upon it; not to weaken Job's faith, but to try Job's strength, and to show to men of after ages how valiant a man Job was. Faith, if it be strong, will play the man in the dark; will, like a mettled horse, flounce in bad way, will not be discouraged at trials, at many or strong trials: 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,' is the language of that invincible grace of God (Job 13:15). There is also an aptness in those that come to the throne of grace, to cast all degrees of faith away, that carrieth not in its bowels self-evidence of its own being and nature, thinking that if it be faith, it must be known to the soul; yea, if it be faith, it will do so and so: even so as the highest degrees of faith will do. When, alas! faith is sometimes in a calm, sometimes up, and sometimes down, and

sometimes at it with sin, death, and the devil, as we say, blood up to the ears. Faith now has but little time to speak peace to the conscience; it is now struggling for life, it is now fighting with angels, with infernals; all it can do now, is to cry, groan, sweat, fear, fight, and gasp for life.²⁰

Indeed the soul should now run to the cross, for there is the water, or rather the blood and water, that is provided for faith, as to the maintaining of the comfort of justification; but the soul whose faith is thus attacked will find hard work to do this, though much of the well—managing of faith, in the good fight of faith, will lie in the soul's hearty and constant adhering to the death and blood of Christ; but a man must do as he can. Thus now have I showed you the manner of right coming to the throne of grace, for mercy and grace to help in time of need.

None but the godly know the throne of grace

The next thing that I am to handle, is, first, To show you, that it is the privilege of the godly to distinguish from all thrones whatsoever this throne of grace. This, as I told you, I gathered from the apostle in the text, for that he only maketh mention thereof, but gives no sign to distinguish it by; no sign, I say, though he knew that there were more thrones than it. 'Let us come boldly,' saith he, 'to the throne of grace,' and so leaves it, knowing full well that they had a good understanding of his meaning, being Hebrews (Heb 9:1–8). They being now also enlightened from what they were taught by the placing of the ark of the testimony, and the mercy-seat in the most holy place; of which particular the apostle did then count it, not of absolute necessity distinctly to discourse. Indeed the Gentiles, as I

have showed, have this throne of grace described and set forth before them, by those tokens which I have touched upon in the sheets that go before—for with the book of Revelation the Gentiles are particularly concerned—for that it was writ to churches of the Gentiles; also the great things prophesied of there relate unto Gentile—believers, and to the downfall of Antichrist, as he standeth among them.

But yet, I think that John's discourse of the things attending the throne of grace were not by him so much propounded, because the Gentiles were incapable of finding of it without such description, as to show the answerableness of the antitype with the type; and also to strengthen their faith, and illustrate the thing; for they that know, may know more, and better of what they know; yea, may be greatly comforted with another's dilating on what they know. Besides, the Holy Ghost by the word doth always give the most perfect description of things; wherefore to that we should have recourse for the completing of our knowledge. I mean not, by what I say, in the least to intimate, as if this throne of grace was to be known without the text, for it is that that giveth revelation of Jesus Christ: but my meaning is, that a saint, as such, has such a working of things upon his heart, as makes him able by the Word to find out this throne of grace, and to distinguish it to himself from others. For,

First. The saint has strong guilt of sin upon his conscience, especially at first; and this makes him better judge what grace, in the nature of grace, is, than others can that are not sensible of what guilt is. What it was to be saved, was better relished by the jailor when he was afraid of and trembled at the apprehensions of the wrath of God, than ever it was with him all his life before (Acts 16:29–33). Peter then also saw what saving was, when he began to sink into the sea: 'Lord, save me,' said he, I perish (Matt 14:30). Sin is that without a

sense of which a man is not apprehensive what grace is. Sin and grace, favour and wrath, death and life, hell and heaven, are opposites, and are set off, or out, in their evil or good, shame or glory, one by another. What makes grace so good to us as sin in its guilt and filth? What makes sin so horrible and damnable a thing in our eyes, as when we see there is nothing can save us from it but the infinite grace of God? Further, there seems, if I may so term it, to be a kind of natural instinct in the new creature to seek after the grace of God; for so saith the Word, 'They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit' (Rom 8:5). The child by nature nuzzles in its mother's bosom for the breast; the child by grace does by grace seek to live by the grace of God. All creatures, the calf, the lamb, &c., so soon as they are fallen from their mother's belly, will by nature look for, and turn themselves towards the teat, and the new creature doth so too (1 Peter 2:1–3). For guilt makes it hunger and thirst, as the hunted hart does pant after the water brooks. Hunger directs to bread, thirst directs to water; yea, it calls bread and water to mind. Let a man be doing other business, hunger will put him in mind of his cupboard, and thirst of his cruse of water; yea, it will call him, make him, force him, command him, to bethink what nourishing victuals is, and will also drive him to search out after where he may find it, to the satisfying of himself. All right talk also to such an one sets the stomach and appetite a craving; yea, into a kind of running out of the body after this bread and water, that it might be fed, nourished, and filled therewith. Thus it is by nature, and thus it is by grace; thus it is for the bread that perisheth, and for that which endureth to everlasting life. But,

Second. As nature, the new nature, teaches this by a kind of heavenly natural instinct; so experience also herein helpeth the godly much. For they have found all other places, the throne of grace excepted,

empty, and places or things that hold no water. They have been at Mount Sinai for help, but could find nothing there but fire and darkness, but thunder and lightning, but earthquake and trembling, and a voice of killing words, which words they that heard them once could never endure to hear them again; and as for the sight of vengeance there revealed against sin, it was so terrible, that Moses, even Moses, said, 'I exceedingly fear and quake' (Heb 12:18–21; Exo 19; 2 Cor 3). They have sought for grace by their own performances; but alas! they have yielded them nothing but wind and confusion; not a performance, not a duty, not an act in any part of religious worship, but they looking upon it in the glass of the Lord, do find it spaked and defective (Isa 64:5–8). They have sought for grace by their resolutions, their vows, their purposes, and the like; but alas! they all do as the other, discover that they have been very imperfectly managed, and so such as can by no means help them to grace. They have gone to their tears, their sorrow, and repentance, if perhaps they might have found some help there; but all has either fled away like the early dew, or if they have stood, they have stunk even in the nostrils of those whose they were. How much more, then, in the nostrils of a holy God!

They have gone to God, as the great Creator, and have beheld how wonderful his works have been; they have looked to the heavens above, to the earth beneath, and to all their ornaments, but neither have these, nor what is of [or resulting from] them, yielded grace to those that had sensible want thereof. Thus have they gone, as I said, with these pitchers to their fountains, and have returned empty and ashamed; they found no water, no river of water of life; they have been as the woman with her bloody issue, spending and spending till they have spent all, and been nothing better, but rather grew worse (Mark 5). Had they searched into nothing but the law, it had been sufficient to convince them that there was no grace, nor throne of

grace, in the world. For since the law, being the most excellent of all the things of the earth, is found to be such as yieldeth no grace—for grace and truth comes by Jesus Christ, not by Moses (John 1:17)—how can it be imagined that it should be found in anything inferior? Paul, therefore, not finding it in the law, despairs to find it in anything else below, but presently betakes himself to look for it there where he had not yet sought it—for he sometimes sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law (Phil 3:6–8)—he looked for it, I say, by Jesus Christ, who is the throne of grace, where he found it, and rejoiced in hope of the glory of God (Rom 9:29–31, 5:1–3). But,

Third. Saints come to know and distinguish the throne of grace from other thrones, by the very direction of God himself; as it is said of the well that the nobles digged in the wilderness—they digged it by the direction of the lawgiver, so saints find out the throne of grace by the direction of the grace—giver. Hence Paul prays, that the Lord would direct the hearts of the people into the love of God (2 Thess 3:5). Man, as man, cannot aim directly at this throne; but will drop his prayers short, besides, or the like, if he be not helped by the Spirit (Rom 8:26). Hence the Son saith of himself, 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him' (John 6:44). Which text doth not only justify what is now said, but insinuates that there is an unwillingness in man of himself to come to this throne of grace; he must be drawn thereto. He setteth us in the way of his steps, that is, in that way to the throne by which grace and mercy is conveyed unto us.

Fourth. We know the throne of grace from other thrones, by the glory that it always appears in, when revealed to us of God: its glory outbids all; there is no such glory to be seen anywhere else, either in heaven or earth. But, I say, this comes by the sight that God gives,

not by any excellency that there is in my natural understanding as such; my understanding and apprehension, simply as natural, is blind and foolish. Wherefore, when I set to work in mine own spirit, and in the power of mine own abilities, to reach to this throne of grace, and to perceive somewhat of the glory thereof, then am I dark, rude, foolish, see nothing; and my heart grows fat, dull, savourless, lifeless, and has no warmth in the duty. But it mounts up with wings like an eagle, when the throne is truly apprehended. Therefore that is another thing by which the Christian knows the throne of grace from all others; it meets with that good there that it can meet with nowhere else. But at present let these things suffice for this.

MOTIVES FOR COMING BOLDLY TO THE THRONE OF GRACE

FIFTH. I come now to the motives by which the apostle stirreth up the Hebrews, and encourageth them to come boldly to the throne of grace. FIRST. The first is, because we have there such an high priest, or an high priest so and so qualified. SECOND. Because we that come thither for grace are sure there to speed, or find grace and obtain it.

The first motive, because we have such an high priest there

FIRST. For the first of these, to wit, we have an encouragement to move us to come with boldness to the throne of grace, because we have an high priest there; because we have such an high priest there. 'For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace.' Of this high priest I have already made mention before, to wit,

so far as to show you that Christ Jesus is he, as well as he is the altar, and sacrifice, and throne of grace, before which he also himself makes intercession. But forasmuch as by the apostle here, he is not only presented unto us as a throne of grace, but as an high priest ministering before it, it will not be amiss if I do somewhat particularly treat of his priesthood also. But the main or chief of my discourse will be to treat of his qualifications to his office, which I find to be in general of two sorts. I. LEGAL. II. NATURAL.

THE LEGAL qualifications of Jesus Christ for the office of high priest

I. LEGAL. When I say legal, I mean, as the apostle's expression is, not by 'the law of a carnal commandment,' but by an eternal covenant, and 'the power of an endless life' thereby; of which the priesthood of old was but a type, and the law of their priesthood but a shadow (Heb 7:16, 9:15, 24). But because their law, and their entrance into their priesthood thereby, was, as I said, 'a shadow of good things to come,' therefore where it will help to illustrate, we will make use thereof so to do; and where not, there we will let it pass (Heb 10:1). The thing to be now spoken to is, that the consideration of Jesus Christ being an high priest before the throne of grace, is a motive and encouragement to us to come boldly thither for grace: 'Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession,' and 'come boldly unto the throne of grace' (Heb 4:14, 16). Now, how he was made an high priest; for so is the expression, 'made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec' (Heb 6; 20).

First. He took not his honour upon himself without a lawful call thereto. Thus the priests under the law were put into office; and thus

the Son of God. No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee. Wherefore he was 'called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec' (Heb 5:4–6, 10). Thus far, therefore, the law of his priesthood answereth to the law of the priesthood of old; they both were made priests by a legal call to their work or office. But yet the law by which this Son was made high priest excelleth, and that in these particulars—

1. He was made a priest after the similitude of Melchisedec, for he testifieth, 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec' (Heb 7:17). Thus they under the law were not made priests but after the order of Aaron, that is, by a carnal commandment, not by an everlasting covenant of God.

2. And, saith he, 'inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest, for those priests were made without an oath, but this with an oath, by him that said unto him, The Lord sware, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec' (Heb 7:20, 21).

3. The priesthood under the law, with their law and sacrifices, were fading, and were not suffered to continue, by reason of the death of the priest, and ineffectualness of his offering (Heb 7:23). 'But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood' (v 24). 'For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity, but the word of the oath which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore' (v 28). From what hath already been said, we gather, (1.) What kind of person it is that is our high priest. (2.) The manner of his being called to, and stated in that office.

(1.) What manner of person he is. He is the Son, the Son of God, Jesus the Son of God. Hence the apostle saith, 'we have a great high priest,' such an high priest 'that is passed into the heavens' (Heb 4:14). Such an high priest as is 'made higher than the heavens' (Heb 7:26). And why doth he thus dilate upon the dignity of his person, but because thereby is insinuated the excellency of his sacrifice, and the prevalency of his intercession, by that, to God for us. Therefore he saith again, 'Every' Aaronical 'priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man,' this great man, this Jesus, this Son of God, 'after he had offered one,' one only, one once, but one (Heb 9:25, 26), 'sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified' (Heb 10:11–14). Thus, I say, the apostle toucheth upon the greatness of his person, thereby to set forth the excellency of his sacrifice, and prevalency of his intercession. 'Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus' (Heb 3:1). Or, as he saith again, making mention of Melchisedec, 'consider how great this man was' (Heb 7:4), we have such a high priest, so great a high priest; one that is entered into the heavens: Jesus the Son of God.

(2.) The manner also of his being called to and stated in his office, is not to be overlooked. He is made a priest after the power of an endless life, or is to be such an one as long as he lives, and as long as we have need of his mediation. Now Christ being raised from the dead, dies no more; death hath no more dominion over him. He is himself the Prince of life. Wherefore it follows, 'he hath an unchangeable priesthood.' And what then? Why, then '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' (Heb 7:24, 25). But again,

he is made a priest with an oath, 'the Lord sware, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever.' Hence I gather, (a) That before God there is no high priest but Jesus, nor ever shall be. (b) That God is to the full pleased with his high priesthood; and so with all those for whom he maketh intercession. For this priest, though he is not accepted for the sake of another, yet he is upon the account of another. 'For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God,' to make reconciliation for the sins of the people (Heb 5:1, 2). And again, he is entered 'into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us' (Heb 9:24). God therefore, in that he hath made him a priest with an oath, and also determined that he will never repent of his so doing, declareth that he is, and for ever will be, satisfied with his offering. And this is a great encouragement to those that come to God by him; they have by this oath a firm ground to go upon, and the oath is, 'Thou art a priest for ever,' shalt be accepted for ever for every one for whom thou makest intercession; nor will I ever reject any body that comes to me by thee; therefore here is ground for faith, for hope and rejoicing; for this consideration a man has ground to come boldly to the throne of grace.

Second. But again, as Christ is made a priest by call and with an oath, and so, so far legally; so he, being thus called, has other preparatory legal qualifications. The High Priest under the law was not by law to come into the holiest, but in those robes that were ordained for him to minister in before God; which robes were not to be made according to the fancy of the people, but according to the commandment of Moses (Exo 28). Christ our high priest in heaven has also his holy garment, with which he covereth the nakedness of them that are his, which robe was not made of corruptible things, as silver and gold, &c., but by a patient continuance in a holy life, according to the law of Moses, both moral and ceremonial. Not that

either of these were that eternal testament by which he was made a priest; but the moral law was to be satisfied, and the types of the ceremonial law to be as to this eminently fulfilled; and he was bound by that eternal covenant by which he is made a mediator to do so. Wherefore, before he could enter the holiest of all, he must have these holy garments made; neither did he trust others, as in the case of Aaron, to make these garments for him, but he wrought them all himself, according to all that Moses commanded.

This garment Christ was a great while a—making. What time, you may ask, was required? And I answer, All the days of his life; for all things that were written concerning him, as to this, were not completed till the day that he hanged upon the cross. For then it was that he said, 'It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost' (John 19:28–30). This robe is for glory and for beauty. This is it that afore I said was of the colour of the rainbow, and that compasseth even round about this throne of grace, unto which we are bid to come. This is that garment that reaches down to his feet, and that is girt to him with a golden girdle (Rev 1:13). This is that garment that covereth all his body mystical, and that hideth the blemishes of such members from the eye of God, and of the law. And it is made up of his obedience to the law, by his complete perfect obedience thereto (Rom 5:19). This Christ wears always, he never puts it off, as the [former] high priests put off theirs by a ceremonial command. He ever lives to make intercession; consequently he ever wears this priestly robe. He might not go into the holy place without it, upon danger of death, or at least of being sent back again; but he died not, but lives ever; is not sent back, but is set down at God's right hand; and there shall sit till his foes are made his footstool (John 16:10).

This is that for the sake of which all are made welcome, and embraced and kissed, forgiven and saved, that come unto God by him. This is that righteousness, that mantle spotless, that Paul so much desired to be found wrapt in; for he knew that being found in that he must be presented thereby to God a glorious man, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. This therefore is another of the Lord Jesus' legal qualifications, as preparatory to the executing of his high priest's office in heaven. But of this something has been spoken before; and therefore I shall not enlarge upon it here.

Third. When the high priest under the law was thus accomplished by a legal call, and a garment suitable to his office, then again there was another thing that must be done, in order to his regular execution of his office; and that was, he must be consecrated, and solemnly ushered thereunto by certain offerings, first presented to God for himself. This you have mention made of in the Levitical law; you have there first commanded, that, in order to the high priest's approaching the holiest for the people, there must first be an offering of consecration for himself, and this is to succeed his call, and the finishing of his holy garments (Exo 29:5–7, 19–22). For this ceremony was not to be observed until his garments were made and put upon him; also the blood of the ram of consecration was to be sprinkled upon him, his garments, &c., that he might be hallowed, and rightly set apart for the high priest's office (Lev 8). The Holy Ghost, I think, thus signifying that Jesus the Son of God, our great high priest, was not only to sanctify the people with his blood; but first, by blood must to that work be sanctified himself; 'For their sakes,' saith he, 'I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth' (John 17:19).

But it may be asked, When was this done to Christ, or what sacrifice of consecration had he precedent to the offering up of himself for our

sins? I answer, It was done in the garden when he was washed in his own blood, when his sweat was in great drops of blood, falling down to the ground. For there it was he was sprinkled with his blood, not only the tip of his ear, his thumb, and toe, but there he was washed all over; there therefore was his most solemn consecration to his office; at least, so I think. And this, as Aaron's was, was done by Moses; it was Moses that sprinkled Aaron's garments. It was by virtue of an agony also that his bloody sweat was produced; and what was the cause of that agony, but the apprehension of the justice and curse of Moses' law, which now he was to undergo for the sins of the people.

With this sacrifice he then subjoined another, which was also preparatory to the great acts of his high priest's office, which he was afterwards to perform for us. And that was his drink-offering, his tears, which were offered to God with strong cries (Exo 29:40; Num 28:7). For this was the place and time that in a special manner he caused his strong wine to be poured out, and that he drank his tears as water. This is called his offering, his offering for his own acceptance with God. After 'he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him,' he 'was heard' for his piety, for his acceptance as to this office, for he merited his office as well as his people (Heb 5:7). Wherefore it follows, 'and being made perfect,' that is, by a complete performance of all that was necessary for the orderly attaining of his office as high priest, 'he became the author of eternal salvation, unto all them that obey him' (Heb 5:9).

For your better understanding of me as to this, mind that I speak of a twofold perfection in Christ; one as to his person, the other as to his performances. In the perfection of his person, two things are to be considered; first, the perfection of his humanity, as to the nature of

it; it was at first appearing, wholly without pollution of sin, and so completely perfect; but yet this humanity was to have joined to this another perfection; and that was a perfection of stature and age. Hence it is said that as to his humanity he increased, that is, grew more perfect. For this his increasing was, in order to a perfection, not of nature, simply as nature, but of stature. 'Jesus increased in wisdom and stature' (Luke 2:52). The paschal lamb was a lamb the first day it was yeaned; but it was not to be sacrificed until it attained such a perfection of age as by the law of God was appointed to it (Exo 12:5, 6). It was necessary, therefore, that Christ as to his person should be perfect in both these senses. And indeed 'in due time Christ died for the ungodly' (Rom 5:6).

Again, as there was a perfection of person, or of nature and personage in Christ, so there was to be a perfection of performances in him also. Hence it is said, that Jesus increased in favour with God (Luke 2:52); that is, by perfecting of his obedience to him for us. Now, his performances were such as had a respect to his bringing in of righteousness for us in the general; or such as respected preparations for his sacrifice as a high priest. But let them be applied to both, or to this or that in particular; it cannot be, that while the most part of his performances were wanting, he should be as perfect as when he said, 'The things concerning me have an end' (Luke 22:37).

Not but that every act of his obedience was perfect, and carried in it a length and breadth proportionable to that law by which it was demanded. Nor was there at any time in his obedience that which made to interfere one commandment with another. He did all things well, and so stood in the favour of God. But yet one act was not actually all, though virtually any one of his actions might carry in it a merit sufficient to satisfy and quiet the law. Hence, as I said, it is told

us, not only that he is the Son of God's love, but that he increased in favour with God; that is, by a going on in doing, by a continuing to do that always that pleased the God of heaven.

A man that pays money at the day appointed, beginning first at one shilling, or one pound, and so ceaseth not until he hath in current coin told over the whole sum to the creditor, does well at the beginning; but the first shilling, or first pound, not being the full debt, cannot be counted or reckoned the whole, but a part; yet is it not an imperfect part, nor doth the creditor find fault at all, because there is but so much now told; but concludes that all is at hand, and accepteth of this first, as a first-fruits: so Christ, when he came into the world, began to pay, and so continued to do, even until he had paid the whole debt, and so increased in favour with God. There was then a gradual performance of duties, as to the number of them, by our Lord when he was in the world, and consequently a time wherein it might be said that Christ had not, as to act, done all, as was appointed him to do, to do as preparatory to that great thing which he was to do for us. Wherefore, in conclusion, he is said to be made perfect, 'and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him' (Heb 5:9).

It will be objected, then, that at some time it might be said of Christ that he was imperfect in his obedience. Answ. There was a time wherein it might have been said, Christ had not done all that he was to do for us on earth. But it doth not follow thereupon, that he therefore was imperfect in his obedience; for that all his acts of obedience were done in their proper time, and when they should, according to the will of God. The timing of performances adds or diminishes as to the perfection of obedience, or the imperfection of it. Had these Jews killed the passover three days sooner than the time appointed, they had transgressed (Exo 12:6). Had the Jews

done that on the fourth day to Jericho, which was to have been done on the seventh day, they had sinned (Josh 6:10–16). Duty is beautiful in its time, and the Son of God observed the time. 'I must,' saith he, 'work the works of him that sent me, while it is day,' that is, in their seasons. You must keep in mind that we speak all this while of that part of Christ's perfection, as to duties, which stood in the number of performances, and not in the nature or quality of acts. And I say, as to the thing in hand, Christ had duty to do, with respect to his office as high priest for us, which immediately concerned himself; such duties as gave him a legal admittance unto the execution thereof; such duties, the which, had they not orderly been done, the want of them would have made him an undue approacher of the presence of God, as to that. Wherefore, as I said afore, by what he did thereabout, he consecrated, or sanctified himself for that work, according to God, and was accepted for his piety, or in that he feared and did orderly do what he should do.

Fourth. The next thing preparatory to the execution of this office of high priest was the sacrifice itself. The sacrifice, you know, must, as to the being of it, needs precede the offering of it; it must be before it can be offered. Nor could Christ have been an high priest, had he not had a sacrifice to offer. 'For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer' (Heb 8:3). And I bring in the sacrifice as the last thing preparatory, not that it was last, as to being, for it was before he could be capable of doing any of the afore—named duties, being his body, in and by which he did them, but it was the last as to fitness; it was not to be a sacrifice before the time, the time appointed of the Father; for since he had prepared it to that end, it was fit as to the time of its being offered, that that should be when God thought best also (Heb 10:5).

Behold then, here is the high priest with his sacrifice; and behold again, how he comes to offer it. He comes to offer his burnt-offering at the call of God; he comes to do it in his priestly garments, consecrated and sanctified in his own blood; he comes with blood and tears, or by water and blood, and offereth his sacrifice, himself a sacrifice unto God for the sin of the world; and that too at a time when God began to be weary of the service and sacrifices of all the world. 'Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me,' thou hast fitted me; 'in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure; then said I, Lo I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God' (Heb 10:5-7).

Christ the sacrifice as well as the high priest, and how he offered it

Thus you see our high priest proceeded to the execution of his priestly office; and now we are come to his sacrifice, we will consider a little of the parts thereof, and how he offered, and pleads the same. The burnt-offering for sin had two parts, the flesh and the fat, which fat is called the fat of the inwards, of the kidneys, and the like (Lev 3:12-16). Answerable to this, the sacrifice of Christ had two parts, the body and the soul. The body is the flesh, and his soul the fat; that inward part that must not by any means be kept from the fire (Isa 53:10). For without the burning of the fat, the burnt-offering and sin-offering, both which was a figure of the sacrifice of our high priest, was counted imperfect, and so not acceptable.

And it is observable, that in these kind of offerings, when they were to be burned, the fat and the head must be laid and be burned together; and the priest 'shall cut it into his pieces with his head and

his fat; and the priest shall lay them in order on the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar' (Lev 1:12). To signify, methinks, the feeling sense that this sacrifice of his body and soul should have of the curse of God due to sin, all the while that it suffered for sin. And therefore it is from this that this sacrifice has the name of burnt-offering, it is the burnt-offering for the burning, because of the burning upon the altar all night, until the morning; and the fire of the altar shall be burning in it.

The fat made the flame to increase and to ascend; wherefore God speaks affectionately of the fat, saying, The fat of mine offerings. And again, 'He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied' (Isa 53:10–12). The soul-groans, the soul-cries, the soul-conflicts that the Son of God had, together with his soul-submission to his Father's will, when he was made a sacrifice for sin, did doubtless flame bright, ascend high, and cast out a sweet savour unto the nostrils of God, whose justice was now appeasing for the sin of men.

His flesh also was part of this sacrifice, and was made to feel that judgment of God for sin that it was capable of. And it was capable of feeling much, so long as natural life, and so, bodily sense, remained. It also began to feel with the soul, by reason of the union that was betwixt them both; the soul felt, and the body bled; the soul was in an agony, and the body sweat blood; the soul wrestled with the judgment and curse of the law, and the body, to show its sense and sympathy, sent out dolorous cries, and poured out rivers of tears before God. We will not here at large speak of the lashes, of the crown of thorns, of how his face was bluft with blows and blood; also how he was wounded, pierced, and what pains he felt while life lasted, as he suffered for our sins; though these things are also prefigured in the old law, by the nipping or wringing of the head, the cutting of the sacrifice in pieces, and burning it in the fire (Lev 1).

Now, you must know, that as the high priest was to offer his sacrifice, so he was to bring the blood thereof to the mercy-seat or throne of grace, where now our Jesus is; he was to offer it at the door of the tabernacle, and to carry the blood within the veil; of both which a little.

Christ a willing and an effectual sacrifice

1. He was to offer it, and how? Not grudgingly, nor as by compulsion, but of a voluntary will and cheerful mind: 'If his offering be a burnt-sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it of his own voluntary will' (Lev 1:3). Thus did Christ when he offered up himself, as is manifest by that which follows. (1.) He offered a male, 'himself,' without blemish (Heb 7:27). (2.) He gave himself a ransom; he 'gave his life a ransom' (Matt 20:28). (3.) He laid down his life of himself (John 10:18; Luke 12:5). (4.) He longed for the day of his death, that he might die to redeem his people. (5.) Nor was he ever so joyful in all his life, that we read of, as when his sufferings grew near; then he takes the sacrament of his body and blood into his own hands, and with thanksgiving bestows it among his disciples; then he sings an hymn, then he rejoices, then he comes with a 'Lo, I come.' O the heart, the great heart, that Jesus Christ had for us to do us good! He did it with all the desire of his soul.

2. He did it, not only voluntarily, and of a free will, but of love and affection to the life of his enemies. Had he done thus for the life of his friends, it had been much; but since he did it out of love to the life of his enemies, that is much more. 'Scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commended his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' (Rom 5:7, 8).

3. He did it without relinquishment of mind, when he was in: no discouragement disheartened him; cry and bleed he did, yea, roar by reason of the troubles of his soul, but his mind was fixed; his Father swore and did not repent, that he should be his priest; and he vowed, and said he would not repent that he had threatened to be the plague and death of death (Hosea 13:13, 14).

4. He did it effectually and to purpose: he hath stopped the mouth of the law with blood; he hath so pacified justice, that it now can forgive; he hath carried sin away from before the face of God, and set us quit in his sight; he hath destroyed the devil, abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel; he hath wrought such a change in the world by what he has done for them that believe, that all things work together for their good, from thenceforward and for ever.

Christ the altar

I should now come to the second part of the office of this high-priest, and speak to that; as also to those things that were preparatory unto his executing it; but first, I think convenient a little to treat of the altar also upon which this sacrifice was offered to God.

Some, I conceive, have thought the altar to be the cross on which the body of Christ was crucified, when he gave himself an offering for sin; but they are greatly deceived, for he also himself was the altar through which he offered himself; and this is one of the treasures of wisdom which are hid in him, and of which the world and Antichrist are utterly ignorant. I touched this in one hint before, but now a little more express. The altar is always greater than the gift; and since the gift was the body and soul of Christ—for so saith the text, 'He gave himself for our sins'—the altar must be something else than a sorry

bit of wood, or than a cursed tree. Wherefore I will say to such, as one wiser than Solomon said to the Jews, when they superstitiated the gift, in counting it more honourable than the altar, 'Ye fools, and blind, for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?' (Matt 23:18, 19).

If the altar be greater than the gift, and yet the gift so great a thing as the very humanity of Christ, can it—I will now direct my speech to the greatest fool—can that greater thing be the cross? Is, was the cross, the wooden cross, the cursed tree, that some worship, greater than the gift, to wit, than the sacrifice which Christ offered, when he gave himself for our sins! O idolatry, O blasphemy!

Quest. But what then was the altar? Answ. The divine nature of Christ, that Eternal Spirit, by and in the assistance of which he 'offered himself without spot to God'; he, through the Eternal Spirit 'offered himself' (Heb 9:14).

1. And it must be THAT, because, as was said, the altar is greater than the gift; but there is nothing but Christ's divine nature greater than his human; to be sure, a sorry bit of wood, a tree, the stock of a tree, is not.

2. It must be this, because the text says plainly 'the altar sanctifies the gift,' that is, puts worth and virtue into it; but was it the tree, or the Godhead of Christ, that put virtue and efficacy into this sacrifice that he offered to God for us? If thou canst but tell thy fingers, judge.

3. The altar was it of old that was to bear up the sacrifice until it was consumed; and with reference to the sacrifice under consideration, the tree could not bear up that; for our sacrifice being a man, consisting of soul and body, that which could bear him up in his suffering condition, must be that that could apply itself to his

reasonable and sensible part for relief and succour, and that was of power to keep him even in his spirit, and in a complete submissiveness to God, in the present condition in which he was; and could the tree do this, think you? Had the tree that command and government of the soul and sense of Christ, of the reason and feeling of the Lord Jesus, as to keep him in this bitter suffering, in that evenness and spotlessness in his torment, as to cause that he should come off this great work, without the least smell or tang of imperfection? No, no; it was through the Eternal Spirit that he 'offered himself without spot to God.'

Quest. Wherefore then served the cross? Answ. I ask, and wherefore then served the wood by which the sacrifices were burned? The sacrifices were burned with wood upon the altar; the wood then was not that altar, the wood was that instrument by which the sacrifice was consumed, and the cross that by which Christ suffered his torment and affliction. The altar then was it that did bear both the wood and sacrifice, that did uphold the wood to burn, and the sacrifice to abide the burning. And with reference to the matter in hand, the tree on which Christ was hanged, and the sacrifice of his body, were both upheld by his divine power; yet the tree was no more a sacrifice, nor an altar, than was the wood upon the altar; nor was the wood, but the fire, holy, by which the sacrifice was consumed. Let the tree then be the tree, the sacrifice the sacrifice, and the altar the altar; and let men have a care how, in their worship, they make altars upon which, as they pretend, they offer the body of Christ; and let them leave off foolishly to dote upon wood, and the works of their hands: the altar is greater than the gift or sacrifice that was, or is, upon it.

How Christ executes the office of high-priest

We come now to the second part of the office of this high-priest and to show how he performeth that. In order to which, I must, as I did with reference to the first, show you what things, as preparatory, were to precede the execution of it. We have here, as you see, 'our passover sacrificed for us,' for our encouragement to come to the throne of grace; and now let us look to it, as it is presented in the holiest of all, and to the order of its being so presented.

1. First, then, before there was anything further done, I mean by this high-priest, as to a further application of his offering, the judgment of God was waited for by him, with respect to his estimation of what was already done, to wit, how that was resented by him; the which he declared to the full by raising him from the dead. For in that he was raised from the dead, when yet he died for our sins, it is evident that his offering was accepted, or esteemed of value sufficient to effect that for the which it was made a sacrifice, which was for our sins; this, therefore, was in order to his being admitted into heaven. God, by raising him from the dead, justified his death, and counted it sufficient for the saving of the world. And this Christ knew would be the effect of his death, long before he gave himself a ransom; where he saith, 'This also shall please the Lord better than an ox, or bullock that hath horns and hoofs' (Psa 69:31). And again, 'For the Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? Let us stand together; who is mine adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up' (Isa 50:7–9). All

this is the work of the Lord God, his Father, and he had faith therein, as I said before. And since it was God who was to be appeased, it was requisite that he should be heard in the matter, to wit, whether he was pacified or no: the which he has declared, I say, in raising him up from the dead. And this the apostles, both Paul and Peter, insinuate, when they ascribe his resurrection to the power of another, rather than to his raising of himself, saying, 'this Jesus hath God raised up' (Acts 2:32). 'God hath raised' him up 'from the dead' (3:15), 'whom God raised from the dead,' and the like (4:10, 5:30, 7:56, 13:30). I say, therefore, that God, by raising up Christ from the dead, hath said, that thus far his offering pleased him, and that he was content.

2. But lest the world, being besotted by sin, should not rightly interpret actions, therefore God added to his raising him up from the dead, a solemn exposing of him to view, not to all men, but to such as were faithful, and that might be trusted with the communicating of it to others: 'Him,' saith Peter, 'God raised' from the dead, 'and showed him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him, after he rose from the dead' (Acts 10:40, 41). And this was requisite, not for that it added anything to the value and worth of his sacrifice, but for the help of the faith of them that were to have eternal salvation by him. And it is for this cause that Paul so enlargeth upon this very thing, to wit, that there were them that could testify that God had raised him up from the dead, namely, that men might see that God was well pleased, and that they had encouragement to come boldly by him to the throne of grace for mercy (1 Cor 15:1–8). And this exposing of him to view, was not for the length of a surprising or dazzling moment, but days and nights, to the number of no less than forty; and that to the self-same persons, to wit, 'the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also,' says the text, 'he showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days,

and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God' (Acts 1:2, 3). Thus God therefore being willing more abundantly to show him unto the world, ordered this great season betwixt his resurrection and ascension, that the world might see that they had ground to believe an atonement was made for sin.

3. But again, a third thing that was to precede the execution of the second part of this his priestly office was, the manner and order of his going into the holiest; I say, the manner and order of his going. He was to go thither in that robe of which mention was made before, to wit, in the virtue of his obedience, for it was that which was to make his way for him as now sprinkled with his blood. He was to go thither with a noise which the Holy Ghost calls a shout, saying, 'God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet' (Psa 47:5). This was prefigured by the bells, as I said, which did hang on the border of Aaron's garments. This shout seems to signify the voice of men and angels; and this trumpet the voice and joy of God; for so it says, he shall descend: 'For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God' (1 Thess 4:16). Even as he ascended and went up; for Aaron's bells were to be heard when he went into, and when he came out of, the holy place (Exo 28:33–35). But what men were to ascend with him, but, as was said afore, the men that 'came out of the graves after his resurrection?' (Matt 27:53). And what angels but those that ministered to him here in the day of his humiliation? As for the evil ones, he then rode in triumph over their heads, and crushed them as captives with his chariot wheels. He is ascended on high, he has 'led captivity captive, he has received gifts for men' (Eph 4:8).

Thus then he ascended unto, into the holy paradise, where he was waited for of a multitude of the heavenly host, and of thousands of millions of the spirits of just men made perfect. So approaching the

highest heavens, the place of the special presence of God, he was bid sit down at his right hand, in token that, for his sufferings' sake, God had made him the highest of every creature, and given him a name above every name, and commanded that at the name of Jesus now all things in heaven should bow, and promised, that at the day of judgment, all on earth, and under it, should bow too, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:6–11). Thus he presented himself on our behalf unto God, a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour, in which God resteth for ever, for that the blood of this sacrifice has always with him a pleasing and prevailing voice. It cannot be denied, it cannot be outweighed by the heaviness, circumstances, or aggravations of any sin whatsoever, of them that come unto God by him. He is always, as I said before, in the midst of the throne, and before the throne, 'a Lamb as it had been slain,' now appearing in the presence of God for us. Of the manner of his intercession, whether it was vocal or virtual, whether by voice of mouth, or merit of deed, or both, I will not determine; we know but little while here, how things are done in heaven, and we may soon be too carnal, or fantastical in our apprehensions. Intercession he makes, that is, he manages the efficacy and worth of his suffering with God for us, and is always prevalent in his thus managing of his merits on our behalf. And as to the manner, though it be in itself infinitely beyond what we can conceive while here, yet God hath stooped to our weakness, and so expressed himself in this matter, that we might somewhat, though but childishly, apprehend him (1 Cor 13:11, 12). And we do not amiss if we conceive as the Word of God hath revealed; for the scriptures are the green poplar, hazel, and the chestnut rods that lie in the gutters where we should come to drink; all the difficulty is, in seeing the white strakes, the very mind of God there, that we may conceive by it.

But the text says he prayeth in heaven, he makes intercession there. Again, it saith his blood speaks, and, consequently, why may not his groans, his tears, his sighs, and strong cries, which he uttered here in the days of flesh? I believe they do, and have a strong voice with God for the salvation of his people. He may then intercede both vocally and virtually; virtually to be sure he does, and we are allowed so to apprehend, because the text suggesteth such a manner of intercession to us; and because our weakness will not admit us to understand fully the thing as it is, our belief that he maketh intercession for us has also the advantage of being purged from its faultiness by his intercession, and we shall be saved thereby, because we have relied upon his blood shed, and the prevalency of the worthiness of it with God for us; though as to this circumstance, the manner of his interceding, we should be something at a loss.

The Word says that we have yet but the image of heavenly things, or of things in the heavens. I do not at all doubt but that many of those that were saved before Christ came in the flesh, though they were, as to the main, right, and relied upon him to the saving of their souls, yet came far short of the knowledge of many of the circumstances of his suffering for them (Heb 10:1). Did they all know that he was to be betrayed of Judas? that he was to be scourged of the soldiers? that he was to be crowned with thorns? that he was to be crucified between two thieves, and to be pierced till blood and water came out of his side? or that he was to be buried in Joseph's sepulchre? I say, did all that were saved by faith that he was to come and die for them, understand these, with many more circumstances that were attendants of him to death? It would be rude to think so; because for it we have neither scripture nor reason. Even so, we now that believe that 'he ever liveth to make intercession for us,' are also very short of understanding of the manner or mode of his so interceding. Yet we believe that he died, and that his merits have a voice with God for us;

yea, that he manages his own merits before God in way of intercession for us, far beyond what we, while here, are able to conceive.

The scripture saith that 'all the fulness of the Godhead' dwells in him 'bodily' (Col 2:9). It also saith that he is the throne of God, and yet again, that he sits 'on the right hand of the throne' (Isa 22:23; Heb 12:2). These things are so far from being comprehended by the weakest, that they strain the wits and parts of the strongest, yet there is a heavenly truth in all. Heavenly things are not easily believed, no not of believers themselves, while here on earth, and when they are, they are so but weakly and infirmly. I believe that the very appearing of Christ before God is an intercession as a priest, as well as a plea of an advocate; and I believe again, that his very life there is an intercession there, a continual intercession (Heb 9:24; Rom 5:10).

But there is yet something further to be said: Christ, the humanity of Christ, if in it dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, how then appears he before him to make intercession? or if Christ is the throne of grace and mercy-seat, how doth he appear before God as sitting there, to sprinkle that now with his blood? Again, if Christ be the altar of incense, how stands he as a priest by that altar to offer the prayers of all the saints thereon, before the throne?

How these mysteries are to be learned

That all this is written is true; and that it is all truth, is as true: but that it is all understood by every one that is saved I do not believe is true. I mean, so understood as that they could all reconcile the seeming contradictions that are in these texts. There are therefore three lessons that God has set us as to the perfecting of our

understanding in the mysteries of God. 1. Letters. 2. Words. 3. Meanings.

1. Letters. I call the ceremonial law so; for there all is set forth distinctly, everything by itself; as letters are to children: there you have a priest, a sacrifice, an altar, a holy place a mercy-seat: and all distinct.

2. Words. Now in the gospel these letters are put all in a word, and Christ is that word, that word of God's mind; and therefore the gospel makes Christ that priest, Christ that sacrifice, Christ that altar, Christ that holy place, Christ that throne of grace, and all; for Christ is all: all these meet in him as several letters meet in one word.

3. Meanings. Next to the word you have the meaning, and the meaning is more difficult to be learned than either the letters or the word; and therefore the perfect understanding of that is reserved till we arrive to a higher form, till we arrive to a perfect man; 'But when that which is perfect is come, then that' knowledge 'which is in part, shall be done away' (1 Cor 13:10). Meantime our business is to learn to bring the letters into a word, to bring the ceremonies to Christ, and to make them terminate in him; I mean, to find the priesthood in Christ, the sacrifice in Christ, the altar in Christ, the throne of grace in Christ, and also God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself by him. And if we can learn this well, while here, we shall not at all be blamed! for this is the utmost lesson set us, to wit, to learn Christ as we find him revealed in the gospel: 'I determined,' saith Paul, 'not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified' (1 Cor 2:2). And Christians, after some time, I mean those that pray and pry into the Word well, do attain to some good measure of knowledge of him. It is life eternal to know him, as he is to be known here, as he is to be known by the Holy Scriptures (James 4:5). Keep

then close to the Scriptures, and let thy faith obey the authority of them, and thou wilt be sure to increase in faith; 'for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith' (Rom 1:17, 16:25–27).

Believe then that Christ died, was buried, rose again, ascended, and ever liveth to make intercession for thee: and take heed of prying too far, for in mysteries men soon lose their way. It is good therefore that thou rest in this, to wit, that he doth so, though thou canst not tell how he doth it. A man at court gets by his intercession a pardon for a man in the country; and the party concerned, after he had intelligence of it, knows that such an one hath obtained his pardon, and that by his interceding, but for all that he may be ignorant of his methods of intercession, and so are we, at least in part, of Christ. The meaning then is that I should believe, that for Christ's sake God will save me since he has justified me with his blood; 'being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him' (Rom 5:9). Through his intercession, or through his coming between the God whom I have offended and me, a poor sinner: through his coming between with the voice of his blood and merits, which speaketh on my behalf to God, because that blood was shed for me, and because those merits, in the benefit of them, are made over to me by an act of the grace of God, according to his eternal covenant made with Christ. This is what I know of his intercession; I mean with reference to the act itself; to wit, HOW he makes intercession. And since all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily, and sine he also, as to his humanity, is the throne of grace; yea, and since he also is the holiest of all, and the rest of God for ever, it has been some scruple to me, whether it be not too carnal to imagine as if Christ stood distinct in his humanity; distinct, I say, as to space, from the Father as sitting upon a throne, and as so presenting his merits, and making vocal prayers for the life and salvation of his people. The more true

meaning in my apprehension is, that the presence and worth of the human nature, being with the divine, yea, taken into union with God for ever, for the service that was done by God for it, in the world, in reconciling his elect unto him, is still, and ever will be, so deserving in his sight as to prevail—I know not how else to express it—with the divine nature, in whom alone is a power to subdue all impossibilities to itself, to preserve those so reconciled to eternal life.

When I speak of the human nature, I mean the man Christ, not bereft of sense and reasons, nor of the power of willing and affecting; but thus I mean, that the human nature so terminates in the will of the divine; and again, the will of the divine so terminates, as to saving of sinners, in the merit and will of the human, that what the Father would the Son wills, and what the Son wills the Father acquiesces in for ever. And this the Son wills, and his will is backed with infinite merit, in which also the Father rests, that those, all those whom the Father hath given him, be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory (John 17:24). And now I am come to the will and affections of the high-priest.

II. NATURAL. [The natural qualifications of Jesus Christ to be our high priest]

This leads me to the second head, namely, to the natural qualifications of him. And,

First. This is one thing that I would urge, he is not of a nature foreign to that of man; the angels love us well, but they are not so capable of sympathising with us in our distresses, because they are not

partakers of our nature. Nature hath a peculiar sympathy in it; now he is naturally one with us, sin only excepted, and that is our advantage too. He is man as we are, flesh and blood as we are: born of a woman, and in all points made like unto us, that excepted which the Holy Ghost excepteth. 'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham' (Heb 2:14, 16). This doth qualify him much; for, as I said before, there is a sympathy in nature. A man will not be so affected with the hurt that comes to a beast, as he naturally will with the hurt that comes to a man: a beast will be more affected with those attempts that are made upon its own kind to hurt it, than it will be with those that are made upon man. Wherefore? Why, there is a sympathy in nature. Now that Christ, the high priest of the house of God, is naturally one with us, you see the Scriptures plainly affirm. 'God sent forth his Son, made of a woman' (Gal 4:4); he was 'made of the seed of David, according to the flesh' (Rom 1:3); from the fathers of whom, 'as concerning the flesh Christ came,' &c. (Rom 9:5; 2 Tim 2:8). And this must needs then to make him a well—qualified high priest (Heb 2:14, 15). We will not now speak of the necessity of his taking upon him the human nature, to wit, that he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver his people; for that would be here too much beside our matter, and be a diversion to the reader. We are now upon his High Priest's office, and of those natural qualifications that attend him, as to that; and I say, nature is a great qualification, because in nature there is sympathy; and where there is sympathy, there will be a provocation to help, a provocation to help with jealousy and indignation against those that afflict. A bear robbed of her whelps is not more provoked than is the Lord Jesus when there are means used to make them miss of life eternal, for whom he hath died, and for whom he ever lives to make intercession. But,

Second. As there is natural sympathy in Christ to those for whom he is an High Priest, so there is relative sympathy; he has not only taken to or upon him our nature, but he is become one brotherhood with us; now you know brotherhood will carry a man further than nature; so then, when nature and relation meet, there is a double obligation. 'For both he that sanctifieth,' which is Christ, 'and they who are sanctified,' his saints, 'are all of one,' which is God; and they are all of God, as children of a Father; 'for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee' (Heb 2:11, 12). Now a relation is much, and a natural relation most of all. Why, here is a natural relation betwixt Christ the High Priest, and those for whom 'he ever liveth to make intercession'; a natural relation, I say, and that with respect to the humanity which is the nature subject to affliction and distress; 'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same' (Heb 2:14). So then it is for a brother that he is engaged, for a brother that he doth make intercession. When Gideon knew by the confession of Zeba and Zalmunna, that the men that they slew at Tabor were his brethren, his fury came into his face, and he swore they should therefore die (Judg 8:18–21). Relation is a great matter. And therefore it is said again, 'In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful High Priest' (Heb 2:17). A brother is born for adversity; and a brother will go far. This therefore is a second thing or another qualification, with which Christ Jesus is furnished to be an High Priest; he is a brother, there is a brotherly relation betwixt him and us; therefore by virtue of this relation he maketh intercession for us more affectionately.

Third. There are other things in Christ Jesus that makes him naturally of an excellent qualification with reference to his priesthood for us, and they are the temptations and infirmities

wherewith he was exercised in the days of his humiliation. It is true, temptations and infirmities, strictly considered, are none of our nature, no more are they of his; but yet, if it be proper to say temptations and afflictions have a nature, his and ours were naturally the same; and that in all points too; for so says the text, 'He was tempted in all points, like as we are, yet without sin' (Heb 4:15). Are we tempted to distrust God? so was he: are we tempted to murder ourselves? so was he: are we tempted with the bewitching vanities of this world? so was he: are we tempted to commit idolatry, and to worship the devil? so was he (Matt 4:3–10; Luke 4:1–13). So that herein we also were alike; yea, from his cradle to his cross he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs, a man of affliction throughout the whole course of his life.

And observe it, He was made so, or subjected thereto by the ordinance of God; nay, further, it behoved him to be made so, that is, to be made like unto us in all things, the better to capacitate him to the work of his priesthood, with the more bowels and compassion. We will read to you the text; 'Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be,' qualified to be, 'a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted' (Heb 2:17, 18). See here how he is qualified, and to what end; he was tempted as we are, suffered by temptations as we do, in all points and things as we are; that he might be bowels, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make up the difference that is made by sin between God and his people, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. Yea, he by being tempted, and by suffering as he did, he is prepared and enabled so to do; 'for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.' Wherefore, I also call

this qualification both natural and necessary; natural, because in kind the same with ours; that is, his temptations were the same with ours; the same in nature, the same in design, the same as to their own natural tendency; for their natural tendency was to have ruined both him and us, but God prevented. They also were necessary, though not of themselves, yet made so by him that can bring good out of evil, and light out of darkness; made so, I say, to us, for whose sakes they were suffered to assault and afflict him, namely, that he might be able to be merciful, faithful, and succouring to us.

Fourth. Another qualification with which our High Priest is furnished, for the better fitting of him to make intercession for us, is, that we are his members; to be a member is more than to be of the same nature, or the nearest of relations, that excepted. So, then, now he makes intercession for his own self, for his own body, and for the several members of his body. The High Priest under the law did use to offer up sacrifice for himself; first 'for himself,' for his own sins, and then 'for the errors of the people.' I will not say that Christ had any sin that was personally, or by his act, his own; for that would be to blaspheme the name of that Holy One; but yet I will say, he made the sins of the people his own (Psa 69:5). Yea, God the Father made them his; those also for whom he ever liveth to make intercession, are united to him, made members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; and so are any part of himself (2 Cor 5:21).

But we are now about his natural qualifications, and this is one; that they for whom he ever liveth to make intercession are his members, the members of his body; 'we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones,' so saith the Word (Eph 5:30). Wherefore here is a near concern, for that his church is part of himself; it is his own concern, it is for our own flesh. 'No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it' (Eph 5:29).—Things are thus

spoken, because of the infirmity of our flesh.—So that had Christ no love to us as we are sinners, yet because we are part of himself, he cannot but care for us, nature puts him upon it; yea, and the more infirm and weak we are, the more he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, the more he is afflicted for us: 'For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities' (Heb 4:15). He at no time loseth this his fellow—feeling, because he always is our head, and we the members of his. I will add, the infirm member is most cared for, most pitied, most watched over to be kept from harms, and most consulted for.

I love to play the child with little children, and have learned something by so doing; I have met with a child that has had a sore finger; yea, so sore as to be altogether at present useless; and not only so, but by reason of its infirmity, has been a let or hindrance to the use of all the fingers that have been upon that hand, then have I began to bemoan the child, and said, Alas! my poor boy, or girl, hast got a sore finger! Ah! quoth the child, with water in its eyes, and hath come to me to be bemoaned. Then I have begun to offer to touch the sore finger. O! saith the child, pray do not hurt me: I then have replied, Canst thou do nothing with this finger? No, saith the child, nor with this hand either; then have I said, Shall we cut off this finger, and buy my child a better, a brave golden finger? At this the child has started, stared in my face, gone back from me, and entertained a kind of indignation against me, and has no more cared to be intimate with me. Then have I begun to make some use of that good sermon which this little child has preached unto me; and thus have I gone on. If membership be so dear, if this child has such tenderness to the most infirm, the most useless of its members; if it counts me its friend no longer than when I have a mouth to bemoan and carriages that show tenderness to this useless finger; what an interest doth membership give on in the body, and what

compassions hath the soul for such an useless thing, because it is a member! and turning all this over to Jesus Christ, then instead of matter and corruption, there presently comes honey to me out of this child's sore finger; I take leave to tell you now how I use to play. And though I have told this tale upon so grave a truth, as is the membership of Christians with their head, yet bear with me; no child can be so tender of its sore finger as is the Son of God of his afflicted members; he cannot but be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

Ah! who would not make many supplications, prayers, and intercessions, for a leg, for an eye, for a foot, for a hand, for a finger, rather than they will lose it? And can it be imagined that Christ alone shall be like the foolish ostrich, hardened against his young, yea, against his members? It cannot be.

Should he lose a member, he would be disfigured, maimed, dismembered, imperfect, next to monstrous. For his body is called his fulness, yea, the fulness of him that fills all in all. This has naturally a respect for those for whom he ever liveth to make intercession; yea, an unfathomable respect for them, because they are his members.

Fifth. But again, when nature, relation, and membership is urged to show the fit qualifications wherewith Christ is endued, I intend not to intimate, as if the bottom of all lay here; for then it might be urged that one imperfect has all these; for who knows not that sinful man has all these qualifications in him towards his nature, relations, and members? I have therefore, as I said, thus discoursed, only for demonstration—sake, and to suit myself with the infirmity of your flesh. I might come, also, in the next place, to tell you, that Jesus Christ our High Priest is thus, with reference to other designs. We

are his purchase and he counts us so; his jewels, and he counts us so; his estate real, and he counts us so (Psa 16:5, 6). And you know a man will do much, speak much, intercede much and long, for that which he thus is interested in. But we will come to speak more particularly of the exceeding excellency of his natural qualifications, and show you that he hath such as are peculiar to himself alone, and that we are concerned in them.

The peculiar natural qualifications of Christ as our high priest

1. He is holy, and so a suitable High Priest. There is a holiness that sets further from, and a holiness that brings one nearer to, and to be concerned the more with the condition of those in affliction; and that holiness is that which is entailed unto office. When a man is put into an office, the more unholy he is, the worse he performs his office; and the more holy, the better he performs his office. For his holiness obliges him to be faithful unto men, wherein he is concerned by his office. Hence you read, that he is 'a faithful High Priest,' because he is a holy one, and 'such an High Priest became us, who is holy,' &c. (Heb 2:17, 7:26). 'Good and upright is the Lord' Jehovah, Christ Jesus, 'therefore will he teach sinners in the way' (Psa 25:8). 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God' (2 Sam 23:3). I mention these texts to show you, that holiness, when entailed to office, makes a man do that office the better. Now then, Christ is holy, and he is made, called, and made of God an High Priest, after the order of Melchisedec, and is to manage that his office for thee with God; that is to say, to continue to make reconciliation for iniquity; for that iniquity that cleaveth unto thee, and that spuriously breaketh, or issueth from thy flesh after thou art called and converted. For we are now upon the second part of the execution of

the priesthood of Christ; that which he executeth, I say; and by executing takes away the iniquity of our holy things and of our life, after our turning to God by him. Now he that is to do this is holy, and so one that will make conscience of performing that office for us, with which he is intrusted of God. Hence he is set in opposition to those high priests that had infirmities, that were not holy, and upon this very account preferred above them. 'For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated,' perfected, or holy 'for evermore' (Heb 7:28). This therefore is a great thing, to wit, that we have an High Priest that is holy, and so one that will not fail to perform to the utmost the trust committed to him in our behalf, to wit, 'to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins' (Heb 5:1). This is one thing.

2. There is added to this of his holiness another; and that is harmless. 'For such an High Priest became us who is holy, harmless' (Heb 7:26). A harmful man, when he is in office, O how much mischief may he do! Such an one is partial in doing his office, such an one will put the poor by his right, such an one will buy and sell a cause, a man, an interest, will do or not do, as his harmfulness prompts him to it; 'so is a wicked ruler over the poor people' (Prov 28:15). But now our Jesus, our High Priest, is holy, harmless; he will wrong no man, he will deprive no man, he will condemn no man, he will deny to no man that comes to God by him, the benefit and advantage of his blessed intercession; he respecteth not persons, nor taketh reward. A harmful man will stomach, and hate, and prejudice a man; will wait for an opportunity to do him a mischief; will take the advantage, if he can, to deny him his right, and keep from him his due, when yet it is in the power of his hand to help him. O! but Christ is harmless, harmless as a dove, he thinks no ill, intends no ill, doth no ill; but graciously, innocently, harmlessly, makes intercession for

thee; nor will he be prevailed with to prejudice thy person, or to forbear to take up thy name into his lips, be thy infirmities, and weaknesses, and provocations never so many, if thou indeed comest to God by him. He is holy, and harmless, and so the more fit to become our High Priest and to make intercession for us.

3. But again, this is not all, he also is undefiled; 'For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled.' This term is put in to show, that he neither is, nor can be found, neither now, nor at any time, faulty in his office. A man that is holy may yet be defiled; a man that is harmless may yet be defiled. We are bid to be holy and harmless; and in a gospel sense so every Christian is. O! but Christ is so in a legal sense; in the eye of the law, perfectly so. This is a great matter, for it shows, that as nothing done by us can tempt him to be hurtful to us; so there is nothing in himself that can tempt him so to be. A man that is defiled has that within him that will put him upon using of his office unfaithfully, though he should have no provocation from those for whose good he is to execute his office; but he that is undefiled—undefiled in a law sense—as our Lord Jesus is, is such an one as doth not only not do hurt, and not act falsely in his office, but one that cannot, one that knoweth not, how to be unfaithful to his trust. He is holy, harmless, undefiled, this therefore is a great thing. He has not the original of hurtfulness in him, there is no such root there; there is a root of bitterness, springing up in us, by which not only ourselves, but oftentimes others are defiled (Heb 12:15). O! but our High Priest is undefiled, he is not corrupt, nor corrupteth; he doth his office fairly, faithfully, holily, justly, according to, or answering, our necessities, and the trust reposed in him, and committed to him. But,

4. This is not all; as he is holy, harmless, and undefiled; so he is separate from sinners, both in his conception, in his composition,

and the place ordained for him to execute this part of his High Priest's office in. He was not conceived in the womb by carnal generation; he was not made up of polluted and defiled nature; he officiateth not with those materials that are corrupt, stained, or imperfect; but with those that are unspotted, even with the spotless sacrifice of his own unblemished offering. He, nor his offering, has any such tang, as had the priests, and their sacrifices under the law, to wit, sin and imperfection; he is separate from them in this respect, further than is an angel from a beast. He has none of the qualities, actions, or inclinations of sinners; his ways are only his own; he never saw them, nor learned them, but of the Father; the none upright among men, wherefore he is separated from them to be a priest. Again,

5. As he is thus, so again, he is said to be 'higher than the heavens.' For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. The text saith, that neither saint, nor heavens, are clean in God's sight. 'Behold he puts no trust in his servants,' he chargeth his angels with folly; and again, 'Behold he putteth no trust in his saints, yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight' (Job 4:18, 15:15). Wherefore, by this expression, he shows us that our High Priest is more noble than either heaven or angel: yea, more clean and perfect than any. It shows us also that all the heavenly host are at his command, to do as his intercession shall prevail with the Father for us. All angels worship him, and at his word they become, they all become ministering spirits for them who shall be heirs of salvation.

Besides, by this word he shows, that it is impossible that our High Priest should degenerate or decay; for that he is made 'higher than the heavens'; the spirits sometimes in the heavens have decayed (2 Peter 2:4). The heavens themselves decay and wax old; and that is

the farthest that by the Word we are admitted to go (Heb 1:10–12). But as for him that is above the heavens, that is made higher than the heavens, that is ascended up far above all heavens; he is the same, and 'his years fail not' (Heb 1:12). 'The same yesterday, today, and for ever' (Heb 13:8). This therefore is added, to show that Christ is neither as the angels, nor heavens, subject to decay, or degenerate, or to flag and grow cold in the execution of his office; but that he will be found even at the last, when he is come to the end of this work, and is about to come out of the holy place, as affectionate, as full of love, as willing, and desirous after our salvation, as he was the first moment that he was made High Priest, and took upon him to execute that his blessed office for us. Wherefore our High Priest is no such one as you read of in the law (Lev 21:18). He is no dwarf, hath no blemish, nor any imperfection; therefore is not subject to flag or fail in due execution of his office, but is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, 'seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.' And it is well worth our consideration, that it is said he is made thus; that is, appointed, instituted, called, and qualified thus of God; this shows the Father's heart as well as the Son's, to usward, to wit, that this priesthood was of him, and the glorious effects thereof by him. 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'

The second motive, we are sure to speed

SECOND. I come now to the second motive, to wit, that we may find grace and mercy to help in time of need; or we shall find grace and mercy to help, if we come as we should, to the throne of grace. In this motive we have these three things considerable. First, That saints are like to meet with needy times while they are in this world. Second, That nothing can carry us through our needy times but more, or a

continual supply of mercy and grace. Third, That mercy and grace is to be had at the throne of grace, and we must fetch it from thence by prayer, if we would, as we should, go through these needy times.

First. For the first of these, that saints are like to meet with needy times, or with such times as will show them that they need a continual assistance of the grace of God, that they may go rightly through this world. This is therefore a motive, that weareth a spur in the heel of it, a spur to prick us forward to supplicate at the throne of grace. This needy time is in other places called the perilous time, the evil day, the hour and power of darkness, the day of temptation, the cloudy and dark day (2 Tim 3:1; Eph 6:13; Luke 22:53; Heb 3:8; Eze 34:12; Gen 47:9; Matt 6:34). And indeed, in the general, all the days of our pilgrimage here are evil, yea, every day has a sufficiency of evil in it to destroy the best saint that breatheth, were it not for the grace of God. But there are also, as I have hinted, particular special times, times more eminently dangerous and hazardous unto saints. As,

Ten special times of need

There are their young days, the days of their youth, and childhood in grace. This day is usually attended with much evil towards him or them that are asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward. Now the devil has lost a sinner; there is a captive has broke prison, and one run away from his master: now hell seems to be awakened from sleep, the devils are come out, they roar, and roaring they seek to recover their runaway. Now tempt him, threaten him, flatter him, stigmatise him, throw dust into his eyes, poison him with error, spoil him while he is upon the potter's wheel; any thing to keep him from coming to Jesus Christ. And is not this a needy time; doth not such an one want abundance of grace? is it not of absolute necessity that

thou, if thou art the man thus beset, shouldst ply it at the throne of grace, for mercy and grace to help thee in such a time of need as this? To want a spirit of prayer now, is as much as thy life is worth. O, therefore, you that know what I say, you that are broke loose from hell, that are fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you, and that do hear the lion roar after you, and that are kept awake with the continual voice of his chinking chain, cry as you fly; yea, the promise is, that they that come to God with weeping, with supplication, he will lead them. Well, this is one needy time, now thy hedge is low, now thy branch is tender, now thou art but in the bud. Pray that thou beest not marred in the potter's hand.

2. The time of prosperity is also a time of need, I mean of thy spiritual prosperity. For as Satan can tell how to suit temptations for thee in the day of thy want, so he has those that can entangle thee in the day of thy fulness. He has his spiritual wickednesses in the high and heavenly places (Eph 6:12). He can tell how to lay a snare for thee in the land of Canaan, as well as in the wilderness; in thy time of receiving good things, as well as in thy hungry and empty hours. Nay, such times seem to be the most dangerous, not in themselves, but through the deceits of our heart. Hence Moses gives this caution to the children of Israel, that when God had given them the promised land, and vineyards, and wells, and olive trees, and when they had eaten and were full, 'Then,' says he, 'beware lest thou forget the Lord which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage' (Deut 6:10–13). And again, he doubleth this caution, saying, 'When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God, for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day; lest when thou hast eaten and art full,' and thou in all good things art increased, 'then thine heart be lifted up,

and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage'; all this may be applied spiritually (Deut 8:10–14). For there are, as I said, snares laid for us in our best things; and he that has great enjoyments, and forgets to pray for grace to keep him humble then, shall quickly be where Peter was, after his knowledge of the Lord Jesus by the revelation of the Father.

3. Another needy time is a time when men are low and empty, as to worldly good; this time is full of temptations and snares. At this time, men will, if they look not well to their doings and goings, be tempted to strain curtesies both with conscience and with God's Word, and adventure to do things that are dangerous, and that have a tendency to make all their religion and profession vain. This holy Agur was aware of; so he prayed, Let me not be rich and full, lest I deny thee; let me not be poor, lest I steal, and take the name of my God in vain (Prov 30:7–9). There are many inconveniences that attend him that is fallen into decay in this world. It is an evil day with him, and the devils will be as busy with him, as the flies are with a lean and scabbed sheep. It shall go hard but such a man shall be full of maggots; full of silly, foolish, idle inventions, to get up, and to abound with fulness again. It is not a time now, will Satan say, to retain a tender conscience, to regard thy word or promise, to pay for what thou buyest, or to stick at pilfering, and filch from thy neighbour. This Agur was afraid of; therefore he prayed that God would keep him from that which would be to him a temptation to do it. How many in our day have, on these very accounts, brought religion to a very ill savour, and themselves unto the snare of the devil, and all because they have not addicted themselves to pray to God for grace to help in this time of need, but rather have left off the thing that is good, and given up themselves to the temptations of the devil, and the subtle and ensnaring motions of the flesh.

4. Another needy time is the day of persecution; this is called, as was hinted before, 'the hour of darkness,' 'the cloudy and dark day.' This day, therefore, is full of snares, and of evils of every kind. Here is the fear of man, the terrors of a prison, of loss of goods and life. Now all things look black, now the fiery trial is come. He that cannot now pray; he that now applieth not himself to God on the throne of grace, by the priesthood of Jesus Christ, is like to take a fall before all men upon the stage; a foul fall, a fall that will not only break his own bones, but also the hearts of those that fear God and behold it: 'Come therefore boldly unto the throne of grace, that ye may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'

5. Another time of need is that time wherein thou changest thy condition, and enterest into a new relation. For here also the snares and traps lie waiting for thee. There is a hopeful child goes to service, or to be an apprentice; there is a young man, a young maid, entereth into a married condition, and though they pray before, yet they leave off to pray then. Why, these people are oftentimes ruined and undone; the reason is, this change is attended with new snares, with new cares, and with new temptations, of the which, because through unwatchfulness they are not aware, they are taken, drawn to perdition and destruction by them. Many in my short day have gone, I doubt, down to the pit, THIS way, that have sometimes been to appearance the very foremost and hopefulest in the place where they have lived. O how soon has their fire gone out; has their lamps forborne to burn! How quickly have they lost their love to their ministers, by whom they were illuminated, and to the warmest Christians, through communion with whom they used to be kept awake and savoury! How quickly have they found them out new friends, new companions, new ways and methods of life, and new delights to feed their foolish minds withal! Wherefore, O thou that

art in this fifth head concerned, 'Come boldly unto the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'

6. Another time of need is, when the generality of professors are decayed; when the custom of fancies and fooleries have taken away all gravity and modesty from among the children of men. Now pray, or thou diest; yea, pray against those decays, those vain customs, those foolish fancies, those light and vain carriages that have overtaken others, else they will assuredly knock at thy door, and obtain favour at thy hand, the which if they do, they will quickly bring thee down into the dirt with others, and put thee in peril of damnation as well as they.

7. Another time of need is, the time of guilt contracted, and of the hiding of God's face. This is a dangerous time. If thou now shalt forbear to pray, thou art undone, for the natural tendency of guilt is to drive a man from God. So it served our first father; and oftentimes when God hides his face, men run into desperation, and so throw up all duties, and say as he of old, 'What should I wait for the Lord any longer?' (2 Kings 6:33). Now thy great help against this is prayer, continuing in prayer. Prayer wrestleth with the devil, and will overthrow him: prayer wrestleth with God, and will overcome him: prayer wrestleth with all temptations, and makes them fly. Great things have been done by prayer, even by the prayer of those that have contracted guilt, and that have by their sins lost the smiles and sense of the favour of God. Wherefore, when this needy, this evil time has overtaken thee, pray: 'Come boldly unto the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'

8. The day of reproach and slander is another time of need, or a day in which thou wilt want supplies of grace. Sometimes we meet with such days wherein we are laden with reproaches, slanders, scandals,

and lies. Christ found the day of reproach a burdensome day unto him; and there is many a professor driven quite away from all conscience towards God, and open profession of his name, by such things as these (Psa 69:7). Reproach is, when cast at a man, as if he was stoning to death with stones. Now ply it hard at the throne of grace, for mercy and grace to bear thee up, or thou wilt either miscarry or sink under ground by the weight of reproach that may fall upon thee.

9. Another time of need is that wherein a man's friends desert and forsake him, because of his gospel principles, or of those temptations that attend his profession. This is a time that often happeneth to those that are good. Thus it was with Christ, with Paul, with Job, with Heman, and so has been with many other of God's servants in the day of their temptations in this world; and a sore time it is. Job complained under it, so did Heman, Paul, and Christ (John 6:66; 2 Tim 1:15; Job 19:13–19). Now a man is as forlorn as a pelican in the wilderness, as an owl in the desert, or as a sparrow upon the house-top. If a man cannot now go to the throne of grace by prayer, through Christ, and so fetch grace for his support from thence, what can he do? He cannot live of himself (John 15:4). Wherefore this is a sore evil.

10. Another time of need is the day of death, when I am to pack up and to be gone from hence, the way of all the earth. Now the greatest trial is come, excepting that of the day of judgment. Now a man is to be stripped of all, but that which cannot be shaken. Now a man grows near the borders of eternity. Now he begins to see into the skirts of the next world. Now death is death, and the grave the grave indeed! Now he begins to see what it is for body and soul to part, and what to go and appear before God (Eccl 12:5). Now the dark entry, and the thoughts of what is in the way from a deathbed to the gate of

the holy heaven, comes nearer the heart than when health and prosperity do compass a man about. Wherefore this is like to be a trying time, a time of need indeed. A prudent man will make it one of the great concerns of his whole life to get, and lay up a stock of grace for this day, though the fool will rage and be confident: for he knows all will be little enough to keep him warm in his soul, while cold death strokes his hand over his face, and over his heart, and is turning his blood into jelly; while strong death is loosing his silver cord, and breaking his golden bowl! (Eccl 12:6). Wherefore, I say, this motive weareth a spur on his heel, a spur to prick us on to the throne of grace for mercy, and grace to help in time of need. But,

Continual supplies of grace essential to our welfare

Second. I come now to the next thing, which is, to show that nothing can carry us through our needy times, but more or a continual supply of mercy and grace. This the text fully implies, because it directeth us to the throne of grace, for mercy and grace for that very end. And had there been any thing else that could have done it, the apostle would have made mention of it, and would also have directed the saints unto it. But forasmuch as he here makes mention of the needy time, and directs them to the throne of grace for mercy and grace to help, it followeth that mercy and grace, and that only, can help us in the evil time. Now mercy and grace are to be distinctly considered. 1. Mercy, for that by it we have through Christ the continuation and multiplication of forgivenesses, without which there is no salvation. 2. Grace, for that by it we are upheld, supported, and enabled to go through our needy times, as Christians, without which there is no

salvation neither. The first all will grant, the second is clear: 'If any man draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him; but we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul' (Heb 10:38, 39).

1. Mercy is that by which we are pardoned, even all the falls, faults, failings, and weaknesses, that attend us, and that we are incident to, in this our day of temptation; and for this mercy we should pray, and say, 'Our Father, forgive us our trespasses' (Matt 6:9–12). For though mercy is free in the exercise of it to usward, yet God will have us ask, that we may have; as he also saith in the text, 'Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy.' Here then we have one help, and that is, the mercy of God is to be extended to us from his throne through Jesus Christ, for our pardon and forgiveness in all those weaknesses that we are attended with in the needy or evil times; and we should come to God for this very thing. This is that which David means, when he says, 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever' (Psa 23:6). And again, 'When I said my foot slippeth; thy mercy, O Lord, held me up' (Psa 94:18). Set me clear and free from guilt, and from the imputation of sin unto death, by Christ.

Nor can any thing help where this is wanting; for our parts, our knowledge, our attainments, nor our graces, cannot so carry us through this world, but that we shall be guilty of that that will sink us down to hell, without God's pardoning mercy. It is not the grace that we have received can do it, nor the grace that is to be received that can do it; nothing can do it but the pardoning mercy of God: for because all our graces are here imperfect, they cannot produce a spotless obedience. But where there is not a spotless obedience, there must of necessity follow a continuation of pardon and forgiveness by mercy, or I know what will become of the soul. Here, therefore, the

apostle lays an obligation upon thee to the throne of grace, to wit, that thou mayest obtain mercy, a continuation of mercy, mercy as long as thou art like to live this vain life on the earth; mercy that will reach through all thy days. For there is not a day, nor a duty; not a day that thou livest, nor a duty that thou dost, but will need that mercy should come after to take away thy iniquity. Nay, thou canst not receive mercy so clearly, as not to stand in need of another act of mercy to pardon weakness in thy no better receiving the last. We receive not our mercies so humbly, so readily, so gladly, and with that thankfulness as we should: and therefore, for the want of these, have the need of another, and another act of God's sin-pardoning mercy, and need shall have thereof, as long as evil time shall last with us.

But is not this great grace, that we should thus be called upon to come to God for mercy? Yea, is not God unspeakably good, in providing such a throne of grace, such a sacrifice, such a high priest, and so much mercy for us, and then to invite us to come with boldness to him for it? Nay, doth not his kindness yet further appear, by giving of us items and intimations of needy times, and evil days, on purpose to provoke us to come to him for mercy? This then shows us, as also we have hinted before, that the throne of grace, and Christ Jesus our High Priest, are both provided upon the account of our imperfections, namely, that we who are called might not be, by remaining weaknesses, hindered of, but obtain eternal inheritance. Weaknesses, such weaknesses remain in the justified, and such slips and failings are found in and upon them, that call for a course of mercy and forgiveness to attend them. Farther, this also intimates, that God's people should not be dejected at the apprehensions of their imperfections; I say, not so dejected, as therefore to cast off faith, and hope, and prayer; for a throne of grace is provided for

them, to the which they may, they must, they ought continually to resort for mercy, sin-pardoning mercy.

2. As we are here to obtain mercy, so we are here to find grace. They that obtain mercy, shall find grace, therefore they are put together. That they may obtain mercy and find grace; only they must find mercy first; for as forgiveness at first goes before sanctification in the general, so forgiveness afterwards goes before particular acts of grace for further sanctification. God giveth not the spirit of grace to those that he has not first forgiven by mercy, for the sake of Christ. Also so long as he as a Father forbears to forgive us as his adopted, so long we go without those further additions of grace that are here suggested in the text. But when we have obtained mercy to forgive, then we also find grace to our renewing. Therefore he saith, First obtain mercy, and then find grace.

Grace here I take to be that grace which God has appointed for us, to dwell in us; and that by and through the continual supply of which we are to be enabled to do and suffer, and to manage ourselves in doing and suffering according to the will of God. 'Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear' (Heb 12:28). So again, 'he giveth more grace; wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble' (James 4:6; Prov 3:34; 1 Peter 5:5). The grace, therefore, that this text intends, is grace given or to be given; grace received or to be received; grace a root, a principle of grace, with its continual supplies for the perfecting of that salvation that God has designed for us. This was that which comforted Paul, when the messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him, it was said unto him by Christ, 'My grace is sufficient for thee' (2 Cor 12:9). As who should say, Paul, be not utterly cast down, I have wherewith all to make thee stand, and overcome, and that is my grace, by which thou shalt be supported, strengthened,

comforted, and made to live a triumphant life, notwithstanding all that oppress thee. But this came to him upon his praying; for this I prayed to God thrice, saith he. So again, 'God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye always have all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work' (2 Cor 9:8). Thus you see, that by grace in these places is meant that spirit, and those principles of grace, by the increase and continual supply of which we are inwardly strengthened, and made to abound to every good work.

This then is the conclusion, That as there is mercy to be obtained by us at the throne of grace, for the pardon of all our weaknesses; so there is also grace there to be found that will yet strengthen us more, to all good walking and living before him. He giveth more grace, and they receive one time or another abundance of grace that shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ. This then teaches us several things, some of which I will mention. As,

What this should teach us

1. That nature, as nature, is not capable of serving of God: no, not nature where grace dwells, as considered abstract from that grace that dwells in it. Nothing can be done aright without grace, I mean no part nor piece of gospel-duty. 'Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably.' Nature, managed by grace, seasoned with grace, and held up with grace, can serve God acceptably. Let us have grace, seek for and find grace to do so; for we cannot do so but by grace: 'By the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me' (1 Cor 15:10). What can be more plain than this beautiful text? For the apostle doth here quite shut out nature, sanctified nature, for he

indeed was a sanctified man, and concludes that even he, as of himself, did nothing of all the great works that he did; but they were done, he did them by the grace of God that was in him. Wherefore nature, sanctified nature, as nature, can of itself do nothing to the pleasing of God the Father.

Is not this the experience of all the godly? Can they do that at all times which they can do at some times? Can they pray, believe, love, fear, repent, and bow before God always alike? No. Why so? they are the same men, the same human nature, the same saints. Aye, but the same grace, in the same degree, operation, and life of grace, doth not so now work on that man, that nature, that saint; therefore, notwithstanding he is what he is, he cannot do at all times alike. Thus therefore it is manifest, that nature, simply as such, is a great way off of doing that which is acceptable with God. Refined, purified, sanctified nature, cannot do but by the immediate supplies, lifts, and helps of that spirit and principle of grace by the which it is so sanctified.

2. As nature, even where grace is, cannot, without the assistance of that grace, do anything acceptably before God; so grace received, if it be not also supplied with more grace, cannot cause that we continue to do acceptable service to God. This also is clear by the text, For he speaketh there to them that had received grace; yea, puts himself into the number, saying, 'Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may find grace to help in time of need.' If grace received would do, what need for more? What need we pray for more? What need we go to the throne of grace for more? This very exhortation saith it will not: present supplies of grace are proportioned to our present need, and to help us to do a present work or duty. But is our present need all the need that we are like to have, and the present work all the work that we have to do in the

world? Even so the grace that we have received at present, though it can help us to do a present work, it cannot, without a further supply, help us to do what is to be done hereafter. Wherefore, the apostle saith, that his continuing to do was through his obtaining help, continual help of God: 'Having, therefore,' saith he, 'obtained help of God, I continue unto this day witnessing both to small and great,' &c. (Acts 26:22). There must be a daily imploring of God for daily supplies from him, if we will do our daily business as we should.

A present dispensation of grace is like a good meal, a seasonable shower, or a penny in one's pocket, all which will serve for the present necessity. But will that good meal that I ate last week, enable me, without supply, to do a good day's work in this? or will that seasonable shower which fell last year, be, without supplies, a seasonable help to the grain and grass that is growing now? or will that penny that supplied my want the other day, I say, will the same penny also, without a supply, supply my wants today? The same may, I say, be said of grace received; it is like the oil in the lamp, it must be fed, it must be added to. And there, there shall be a supply, 'wherefore he giveth more grace.' Grace is the sap, which from the root maintaineth the branches: stop the sap, and the branch will wither. Not that the sap shall be stopped where there is union, not stopped for altogether; for as from the root the branch is supplied, so from Christ is every member furnished with a continual supply of grace, if it doth as it should; 'of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace' (John 1:16).

The day of grace is the day of expense: this is our spending time. Hence we are called pilgrims and strangers in the earth, that is, travellers from place to place, from state to state, from trial to trial (Heb 11:13). Now, as the traveller at a fresh inn is made to spend fresh money; so Christians, at a fresh temptation, at a new

temptation, are made to spend afresh, and a new supply of grace. Great men, when and while their sons are travellers, appoint that their bags of money be lodged ready, or conveniently paid in at such and such a place, for the suitable relief of them; and so they meet with supplies. Why, so are the sons of the Great One, and he has allotted that we should travel beyond sea, or at a great distance from our Father's house: wherefore he has appointed that grace shall be provided for us, to supply at such a place, such a state or temptation, as need requires: but withal, as my lord expecteth his son should acquaint him with the present emptiness of his purse, and with the difficulty he hath now to grapple with; so God our Father expects that we should plead by Christ our need at the throne of grace, in order to a supply of grace: 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'

Now then, this shows the reason why many Christians that are indeed possessed with the grace of God, do yet walk so oddly, act so poorly, and live such ordinary lives in the world. They are like to those gentlemen's sons that are of the more extravagant sort, that walk in their lousy hue, when they might be maintained better. Such young men care not, perhaps scorn to acquaint their fathers with their wants, and therefore walk in their threadbare jackets, with hose and shoes out at heels! a right emblem of the uncircumspect child of God. This also shows the reason of all those dreadful falls and miscarriages that many of the saints sustain, they made it not their business to watch to see what is coming, and to pray for a supply of grace to uphold them; they, with David, are too careless, or, with Peter, too confident, or, with the disciples, too sleepy, and so the temptation comes upon them; and their want like an armed man. This also shows the reason why some that, to one's thinking, would fall every day; for that their want of parts, their small experience,

their little knowledge of God's matters, do seem to bespeak it; yet stand, walk better, and keep their garments more white than those that have, when compared with them, twice as much as they. They are praying saints, they are often at the throne of grace, they are sensible of their weakness, keep a sight of their danger before their faces, and will not be contented without more grace.

Third. And this leads me, in the third place, to show you, that were we wise, and did we ply it at the throne of grace for grace, as we should, O what spotless lives might we live! We should then have always help in time of need; for so the text insinuates, 'That we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' This is that which Peter means, when he says, 'And besides this,' that is, besides your faith in Christ, and besides your happy state of justification, 'giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound,' and be continually supplied with a supply from the throne of grace, 'they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (2 Peter 1:5–11).

The greatest part of professors now-a-days take up their time in contracting of guilt, and asking for pardon, and yet are not much the better. Whereas, if they had but the grace to add to their faith, virtue, &c., they might have more peace, live better lives, and not have their

heads so often in a bag as they have. 'To him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God' (Psa 50:23). To him that disposeth his way aright; now this cannot be done without a constant supplicating at the throne of grace for more grace. This then is the reason why every new temptation that comes upon thee, so foils, so overcomes thee, that thou wilt need a new conversion to be recovered from under the power and guilt that cleaves to thee by its overshadowing of thee. A new temptation, a sudden temptation, an unexpected temptation, usually foils those that are not upon their watch; and that have not been before with God to be inlaid with grace proportionable to what may come upon them.

'That ye may find grace to help in time of need'! There is grace to be found at the throne of grace that will help us under the greatest straits. 'Seek and ye shall find'; it is there, and it is to be found there; it is to be found there of the seeking soul, of the soul that seeketh him. Wherefore I will conclude as I did begin; 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'

CONCLUSION. some lessons to be learned from this text

We will now speak something by way of conclusion, and so wind up the whole.

First. You must remember that we have been hitherto speaking of the throne of grace, and showing what it is. That we have also been speaking of Christ's sacrifice, and how he manages his high priest's office before the throne of grace. We have also here, as you see, been

speaking of the mercy and grace that is to be obtained and found at this throne of grace, and of what advantage it is to us in this our pilgrimage. Now, from all this it follows, that sin is a fearful thing: for all this ado is, that men might be saved from sin! What a devil then is sin? it is the worst of devils; it is worse than all devils; those that are devils sin hath made them so; nor could anything else have made them devils but sin. Now, I pray, what is it to be a devil, but to be under, for ever, the power and dominion of sin, an implacable spirit against God? Such an one, from which implacableness all the power in heaven and earth cannot release them, because God of his justice has bound them over to judgment. These spirits are by sin carried quite away from themselves, as well as from God that made them; they cannot design their own good; they cannot leave that which yet they know will be everlasting mischievous to themselves. Sin has bound them to itself so fast, that there can be no deliverance for them, but by the Son of God, who also has refused them, and left them to themselves, and to the judgment which they have deserved. Sin also has got a victory over man, has made him an enemy to God and to his own salvation; has caught him, captivated him, carried away his mind, and will, and heart, from God; and made him choose to be vain, and to run the hazard of eternal damnation, with rejoicing and delight. But God left not man where he left those wicked spirits, to wit, under the everlasting chains of darkness, reserved unto judgment; but devised means for their ransom and reconciliation to himself; which is the thing that has been discoursed of in the foregoing part of this book (2 Sam 15:15). But, I say, what a thing is sin, what a devil and master of devils is it, that it should, where it takes hold, so hang that nothing can unclinch its hold but the mercy of God and the heart-blood of his dear Son! O the fretting, eating, infecting, defiling, and poisonous nature of sin, that it should so eat into our flesh and spirit, body and soul, and so stain us with its vile and stinking nature: yea, it has almost turned man into the nature of

itself; insomuch as that sometimes, when nature is mentioned, sin is meant; and when sin is mentioned, nature is meant (Eph 2:3, 5:8). Wherefore sin is a fearful thing; a thing to be lamented, a thing to be abhorred, a thing to be fled from with more astonishment and trembling than one would fly from any devil, because it is the worst of things; and that without which nothing can be bad, and because where it takes hold it so fasteneth that nothing, as I have said, can release whom it has made a captive, but the mercy of God and the heart-blood of his dear Son. O what a thing is sin!

Second. As by what hath been said sin appears to be exceeding sinful; so, from hence it also follows, that the soul is a precious thing. For you must know all this is for the redemption of the soul. The redemption of the soul is precious (Psa 49:8, 20). I say, it is for the redemption of the soul; it was for this that Christ was made a priest, a sacrifice, an altar, a throne of grace; yea, sin, a curse, and what not, that was necessary for our deliverance from sin, and death, and everlasting damnation. He that would know what a soul is, let him read in letters of blood the price and purchase of the soul. It was not for a light, a little, an inconsiderable thing, that Christ Jesus underwent what he suffered when he was in the world, and gave himself a ransom for souls. No, no! The soul is a great, a vast great thing, notwithstanding it is so little set by of some. Some prefer anything that they fancy, above the soul; a slut, a lie, a pot, an act of fraudulency, the swing of a prevailing passion, anything shall be preferred when the occasion offereth itself. If Christ had set as little by souls as some men do, he had never left his Father's bosom, and the glory that he had with him; he had never so humbled himself, so gave himself to punishment, affliction, and sorrow; and made himself so the object of scorn, and contempt, and reproach, as he did, and all that the souls of sinners might live a life in glory with him.

But methinks this is the mystery of all as to this, that the soul should take that pains, contrive such ways, and take such advantages against itself! For it is the soul that sins, that the soul might die! O! sin, what art thou? What hast thou done? and what still wilt thou further do, if mercy, and blood and grace doth not prevent thee? O silly soul! what a fool has sin made of thee? what an ass art thou become to sin? that ever an immortal soul, at first made in the image of God, for God, and for his delight, should so degenerate from its first station, and so abase itself that it might serve sin, as to become the devil's ape, and to play like a Jack Pudding for him upon any stage or theatre in the world! But I recall myself; for if sin can make one who was sometimes a glorious angel in heaven, now so to abuse himself as to become, to appearance, as a filthy frog, a toad, a rat, a cat, a fly, a mouse, a dog, or bitch's whelp, to serve its ends upon a poor mortal, that it might gull them of everlasting life, no marvel if the soul is so beguiled as to sell itself from God, and all good, for so poor a nothing as a momentary pleasure is. But,

Third. If sin and the soul are such great things, then behold the love and care of God; the love to souls, the care he hath taken to deliver them from sin. Sin, as I have said, is such a thing as from which no man can deliver himself; the soul is such a thing, so rich and valuable in the nature of it, that scarce one in twenty thousand counts of it as they should. But God, the lover of mankind, and the greatest enemy to sin, has provided means effectually to overthrow the one, and to save and secure the other. Behold, therefore, the love of God, the care of God for us; for when we neither loved nor cared for ourselves, God both loved us and cared for us. God commended his love towards us in sending his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Let it be then concluded that 'GOD IS LOVE,' and that the love that God hath to us is such as we never had for ourselves. We have been

often tried about our own love to ourselves, and it has been proved over, and over, and over, that sometimes even we that are Christians could, and would, had it been possible, have pawned ourselves, our souls, and our interest in Christ, for a foul and beastly lust. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, would not suffer it so to be. Now, if we are so fickle and uncertain in our love to ourselves, as to value our salvation at so low and so base a rate, can it be imagined that ever we should, had it been left to our choice, have given the best of what we have for the salvation of our souls? Yet God gave his Son to be the Saviour of the world. I say again, if our love is so slender to our own souls, can any think that it should be more full to the souls of others? And yet God had such love to us, as to give his only begotten Son for our sins. Yet again, how should it be that we, who are usually so affected with the conceit of our own happiness, since we care no more for our own souls, do our best to secure the souls of others? and yet God, who is infinitely above all creatures, has so condescended, as to concern himself, and to give the best of his flock, even his only beloved Son, for very dust and ashes. Wherefore, 'Herein is love, not that we loved God,' or our neighbour, 'but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins' (1 John 4:10).

Fourth. Is sin so vile a thing? is the soul so precious a thing? and is God's love and care of the salvation of the souls of sinners infinitely greater than is their own care for their own souls? Then this should teach those concerned to blush, to blush, I say, and to cover their faces with shame. There is nothing, as I know of, that more becomes a sinner, than blushing and shame doth; for he is the harbourer, the nurse, and the nourisher of that vile thing called sin; that so great an enemy of God, and that so great an enemy to the soul. It becomes him also, if he considers what a creature God has made him, and how little he hath set by his own creation, and by the matter of which God

hath made his soul. Let him also consider unto what base things he hath stooped and prostrated himself, while things infinitely better have stood by and offered themselves unto him freely; yea, how he has cast that God that made him, and his Son that came to redeem him, quite behind his back, and before their faces embraced, loved, and devoted himself unto him that seeks nothing more than the damnation of his soul.

Ah, Lord! when will foolish man be wise, and come to God with his hands upon his head, and with his face covered with shame, to ask him forgiveness for that wickedness which he has committed? which is wickedness committed not only against holiness and justice, against which also men by nature have an antipathy, but against mercy and love, without which man cannot tell what to do. Blush, sinner, blush. Ah, that thou hadst grace to blush! But this is God's complaint, 'Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush' (Jer 8:12). It is a sad thing that men should be thus void of consideration, and yet they are so. They are at a continual jest with God and his Word, with the devil and sin, with hell and judgment. But they will be in earnest one day; but that one day will be too late!

Fifth. Is it so that God, though sin is so fearful a thing, has prepared an effectual remedy against it, and purposed to save us from the evil and damning effects thereof? (1.) Then this should beget thankfulness in the hearts of the godly, for they are made partakers of this grace; I say, it should beget thankfulness in thy heart. 'Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift,' said the apostle, when he seriously thought of that which was much inferior to what we have been a discoursing of (2 Cor 9:15). That was about man's willingness to do good; this is about God's. That was about men's willingness to give money to poor saints; this about God's willingness to give Christ

Jesus his Son to the world. It was the thoughts of this redemption and salvation that made David say, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name' (Psa 103:1). O! they that are partakers of redeeming grace, and that have a throne of grace, a covenant of grace, and a Christ, that is the Son of God's love, to come to, and to live by, should be a thankful people. 'By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually,—giving thanks in his name' (Heb 13:15). How many obligations has God laid upon his people, to give thanks to him at every remembrance of his holiness. (2.) Study the priesthood, the high priesthood of Jesus Christ, both the first and second part thereof. The first part was that when he offered up himself without the gate, when he bare our sins in his own body on the tree. The second part is that which he executeth there whither he is now gone, even in heaven itself, where the throne of grace is. I say, study what Christ has done, and is adoining. O! what is he adoining now? he is sprinkling his blood with his priestly robes on, before the throne of grace; that is too little thought on by the saints of God: 'We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man' (Heb 8:1, 2). Busy thyself, fellow-Christian, about this blessed office of Christ. It is full of good, it is full of sweet, it is full of heaven, it is full of relief and succour for the tempted and dejected; wherefore, I say again, study these things, give thyself wholly to them.

Sixth. Since God has prepared himself a lamb, a sacrifice, a priest, a throne of grace, and has bid thee come to him, come to him as there sitting; come, come boldly, as he bids thee. What better warrant canst thou have to come, than to be bid to come of God? When the goodman himself bids the beggar come to his house, then he may come, then he may come boldly; the consideration of the invitation doth encourage. That we have our friend at court, should also make

us come boldly. Jesus, as has been showed, as sacrifice and high priest, is there, 'in whom we have boldness, and access with confidence by the faith of him' (Eph 3:12). Again, 'By whom also we have access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God' (Rom 5:2). Again, 'We have boldness, brethren, to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus' (Heb 10:19, 20). What can be more plain, more encouraging, more comfortable to them that would obtain mercy, 'and find grace to help in time of need.' It is a dishonour to God, disadvantage to thee, and an encouragement to Satan, when thou hangest back, and seemest afraid to 'come boldly unto the throne of grace.' 'Let us,' therefore, 'draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water; let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised, and let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works' (Heb 10:22–24). Farewell.

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