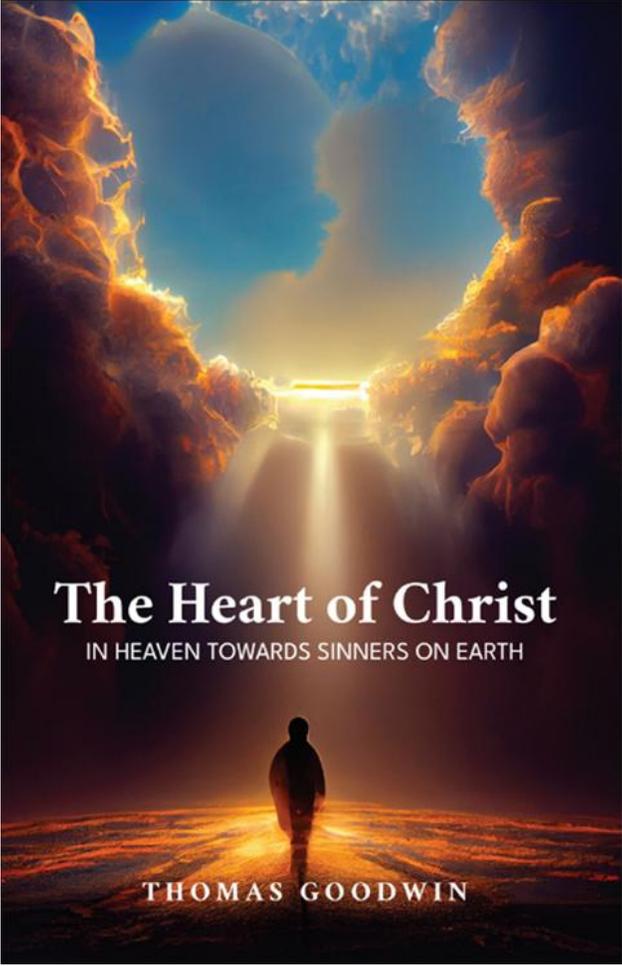
A dramatic, high-contrast image of a person standing on a path leading towards a bright light in a cloudy sky. The person is silhouetted against the light, and the path is illuminated by a strong beam of light from above. The sky is filled with large, billowing clouds, and the overall atmosphere is one of hope and divine presence.

The Heart of Christ

IN HEAVEN TOWARDS SINNERS ON EARTH

THOMAS GOODWIN



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The Heart of Christ

in Heaven Towards Sinners on Earth

by Thomas Goodwin

The gracious disposition and tender affection of *Christ* in his human nature now in glory,

unto his members under all sorts of *infirmities*, either of *sin* or *misery*.

Updated to Modern English

Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Demonstrations from Christ's Last Farewell to His Disciples](#)

[Demonstrations from Passages and Expressions after His Resurrection](#)

[Demonstrations from Passages at and after His Ascension into Heaven.](#)

[Part II: The Evil of Afflictions and the Evil of Sin](#)

[A Second Sort of Demonstration of Christ's Heart Toward Sinners](#)

[Christ's heart is touched with the feeling, of our infirmities](#)

Introduction

After describing the remarkable and profound actions of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—his obedience leading to death, resurrection, ascension to heaven, seating at God's right hand, and intercession for us, which have been thoroughly discussed—I will now present this subsequent discourse. It pertains to the heart of Christ as he presently resides in heaven, seated at God's right hand and interceding for us. It reveals how his heart is affected and filled with gracious disposition towards sinners on earth who approach him: how willing he is to receive them, how prepared he is to welcome them, and how tenderly he pities them in all their weaknesses, be it their sins or their misfortunes. The purpose and benefit of this discourse are to embolden and encourage believers to approach the throne of grace more confidently, seeking the aid of such a compassionate Saviour and High Priest. By understanding how sweetly and tenderly his heart inclines towards them, even in his glorious state, they can overcome the significant obstacle that remains unseen but impedes their path to faith. It is the notion that, since Christ is now absent and exalted to a position of immense glory, seated at God's right hand, they are unsure of how to approach him freely and with hopeful expectation to secure their salvation, as those unfortunate sinners who were once physically present with him on Earth.

If only we had the opportunity, they think, to converse with him during his earthly days, just like Mary, Peter, and his other disciples did, we would have felt confident in approaching him and receiving anything from him. After all, they witnessed him as a man, much like themselves, who possessed meekness and gentleness. At that time,

he took on the burden of sin and experienced various forms of suffering. But now, he has ascended to a distant realm, adorned with glory and immortality, and we are uncertain how this transformation might have affected his heart. The aim of this discourse is therefore to assure humble souls that his heart, in terms of compassion and mercy, remains unchanged from his time on earth. He continues to intercede with the same compassionate heart as he did before, displaying the same meekness, gentleness, and willingness to be entreated, and showing tenderness in his innermost being. Consequently, they can approach him with fairness regarding their salvation, with hope and on terms as accessible as if they had been present with him on earth, maintaining a close familiarity with him in all their needs. This knowledge brings immense comfort and encouragement to those who have relinquished all other pursuits in favor of a life of faith and whose souls yearn for a deep and intimate communion with their Saviour, Christ.

Now I will present two types of demonstrations that can aid our faith in this matter: the first being more external and outward, and the second more internal and inward. The former demonstrates that it is indeed true, while the latter delves into the reasons and justifications for its truth.

I. First, let us explore these external demonstrations. They are derived from various instances and actions of Jesus during his different phases: his farewell before his death, his resurrection, ascension, and his current position at God's right hand. I will guide you through the same topics discussed in the previous treatise, albeit with a different purpose. I will extract observations from his words and actions during those significant periods that directly persuade us of the matter at hand—namely, that now, in heaven, his heart

remains as graciously disposed towards sinners who approach him as it was when he walked the earth. To establish a foundation or introduction for these initial demonstrations, I will cite the following scripture. As for the latter demonstrations, I will employ another scripture more suitable for that portion of this discourse.

"When Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." (John 13:1)

Demonstrations from Christ's Last Farewell to His Disciples

I. It was a considerable time before Christ revealed to his disciples that he would be leaving them and ascending to heaven, for in John 16:4, he mentions that he had refrained from telling them "from the beginning." However, when he finally begins to disclose this information, he shares an abundance of his heart with them all at once. He not only expresses his current feelings towards them, but also reveals how his heart will be towards them when he is in his glorious state. To understand this, let us briefly examine his final actions and the sermon he delivered during the last supper, as documented and recounted by the evangelist John. We will find that the purpose behind Christ's extensive discourses, spanning from John chapters 13 to 18, revolves around this very matter. Rather than providing a commentary on these passages, I will simply highlight concise observations that particularly emphasize this theme.

1. The words I have selected as the text serve as the introduction to all the subsequent discourse that follows, including the account of Jesus washing his disciples' feet and his subsequent sermon. This introduction sets the stage and provides a summary of the entire discourse. The preface states: "Before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. And when supper was ended, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and washed his disciples' feet." This preface was intentionally included by the evangelist to offer a glimpse into the heart of Christ, revealing its state at the time of his departure. It sheds light on the subsequent events and provides an interpretation for them. Its purpose is to demonstrate the affection he would have for them in heaven. By sharing Christ's thoughts and unveiling the condition of his heart during that time, this preface sets the stage for everything that follows.

(1.) He begins by describing what was in Christ's thoughts and reflections. Jesus deeply contemplated the fact that he was soon to depart from this world. The text states, "Jesus knew" (indicating his active contemplation), "that he should depart unto the Father." He also pondered the imminent installation into the glory that rightfully belonged to him. As it continues in John 13:3, "Jesus, knowing" (meaning he was actively considering), "that the Father had given all things into his hands," signifying that he would possess all authority in heaven and earth as soon as he set foot in heaven. Amidst these thoughts, he tells us that he proceeded to wash his disciples' feet, having first contemplated his destination and his future role.

(2.) Secondly, amidst all these elevated thoughts, what was Christ's primary concern? It was not solely focused on his own glory, although it is mentioned that he considered it to magnify his love for us. His heart was primarily directed towards "his own." John 13:1 states, "having loved his own," using a term that signifies the closest proximity, endearment, and intimacy based on ownership. The elect are Christ's own, an integral part of himself, not merely as possessions, as seen in John 1:11: "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him." The word used here indicates that he considers them his own, not as objects, but as individuals. In this context, he refers to them as his own in a deeper sense: his own children, his own members, his own spouse, his own flesh. He recognises that while he was to depart from the world, they would remain in it. Hence, it is explicitly added, "which were in the world," signifying their continued presence in this world. He also had others who were his own in the world to which he was going, namely, "the spirits of the righteous made perfect" (Hebrews 12:23), whom he had not yet seen. One might assume that when he was contemplating his departure from this world, his thoughts would revolve around Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom he was going to join. However, his care extended even further to his own who were to remain in this world, a world filled with much evil (as he himself acknowledges in John 17:15), encompassing both sin and suffering, which would inevitably defile and afflict them. Despite his heart being consumed with thoughts of his own glory, he extends his compassion towards them. It is said, "having loved his own, he loved them to the end," indicating the constancy of his love and what it will be when Christ is in his glory. "To the end" conveys the idea of its perfection, according to Chrysostom. Having commenced his love for them, he will bring it to its fullness and completion. And "to the end" also signifies forever.

In Greek, the phrase is sometimes used in this sense, and the evangelist employs it here in alignment with the scripture in Psalm 103:9, where it states, "He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever," as translated. However, in the original text, it says, "He will not keep his anger to the end." Therefore, the purpose of this statement is to demonstrate that Christ's heart and love towards them will endure forever, even when he has departed to his Father, just as it had been during his earthly presence, because they are his own. Having loved them, he does not change or alter, and thus his love for them will be everlasting.

(3.) And thirdly, to provide a tangible testimony regarding his love for them in heaven, the evangelist illustrates that amidst his profound contemplation of approaching glory and the supreme position he would hold, Jesus took water and a towel and washed his disciples' feet. This intention becomes apparent when we observe the connection in the second verse: it is stated that "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands," then (John 13:4) "he rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and took a towel and tied it around his waist." (John 13:5) After that, "he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet." It is evident that the evangelist's purpose is to highlight that when Christ's thoughts were consumed by his glory and he considered it to the utmost, even then, and on that occasion, amidst those thoughts, he humbly washed his disciples' feet. The significance of Christ's act was to demonstrate that while in heaven, he would be unable to perform such visible outward displays of his heart by engaging in humble acts of service. Thus, by undertaking this act while contemplating his glory, he indicated what he would willingly do for them when he fully possessed that glory. Such is the magnitude of his love for them. A similar expression by Christ can be found in Luke 12:36-37, further

affirming his intention here and reflecting his true heart in heaven. In Luke 12:36, he compares himself to a bridegroom who is preparing to ascend to heaven for a wedding feast, while his servants remain on earth, eagerly waiting for his return. Understanding that they may grow weary from the wait, Christ adds, "Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them." This does not imply that Christ currently serves those who are seated with him or will serve them in the future, but rather, it is an expression of overwhelming love and the surpassing joy that awaits us—an experience beyond our expectations. It is an extraordinary description to convey that the Lord would serve his servants and attend to those who eagerly anticipate him. This serves to reveal his heart and what he is willing to do for them. Therefore, you can observe what his heart was before his ascension to heaven, even amidst contemplations of his glory. Furthermore, you can see what it is after he has entered heaven, having been exalted with all his glory—still willingly washing the feet of poor sinners and serving those who come to him and eagerly await his presence.

(4.) Now, fourthly, what was the significance of his act of washing their feet? It served as an example of mutual love and humility, while also symbolising the cleansing of their sins. This interpretation is given by Jesus himself in John 13:8, 10. It is true that now, in heaven, he cannot physically wash their feet, but he conveys the message that those sinners who come to him in his glory will have their sins washed away. As stated in Ephesians 5:25-27, "He loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle."

2. This act serves as a representation and declaration of his intentions. We can glean the main purpose from his actions during this farewell event. Let us now examine the overarching theme of his lengthy sermon delivered on that occasion. We will discover that its primary aim is to further assure his disciples of what his heart will be towards them. This understanding provides another demonstration.

It is not necessary to delve into every detail, but it is undeniable that Christ's efforts to reassure the hearts of his disciples, as well as all believers, exceed the efforts of any loving husband trying to comfort his spouse during his absence. It is essential to remember that whatever Christ said to his disciples applies to us as well, as implied in John 17:20: "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word." Just as his prayer was for all believers, his words were also intended for them.

(1.) Firstly, he reveals to them what his attitude will be towards them and how he will be mindful of them in heaven through the task he declares he is going there to fulfill for their sake. Regarding this, note first that he lovingly informs them in advance, demonstrating care and tenderness, akin to a husband to his wife. Moreover, he speaks with utmost transparency, ensuring that nothing is hidden from them. "I tell you the truth," he says, "it is to your advantage that I go away" (John 16:7). Secondly, he tells them that his departure is entirely for their benefit and happiness. "I go to send you a Comforter," he assures them, for the time when they are in this world, and "to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2), for when they depart from this world. "In my Father's house are many mansions," he explains, "and I go to prepare a place for you," assuring that he will secure and keep their places until they arrive. Once again, he

communicates with openness and candour. "If it were not so," he declares, "I would have told you." They can trust him; he would not deceive them, even for all the glory in the place he is going to. Who could resist such sincerity and vulnerability of heart? Thirdly, the significance of the task itself, which is so greatly beneficial for us and our happiness, further reinforces the assurance. In fact, Christ himself draws from it an argument for the continuance of his love for them. As stated in John 14:3, "If I go and prepare a place for you," indicating that if that is his mission, they need not doubt his love when he is there, for all the glory of the place will never cause him to forget his purpose. While on earth, he did not forget any of the reasons for which he came into the world. "Should I not be about my Father's business?" he declared even as a child (Luke 2:49), and indeed, he fulfilled it to the utmost by fulfilling all righteousness. Surely, he will not forget any of the tasks assigned to him in heaven, which are even more delightful. As explained in the previous discourse from Hebrews 6:20, he has entered as a forerunner, a harbinger, to secure places for us there. And even if he could forget us, our names are all inscribed in heaven around him, continually before his eyes, not only through God's election (as stated in Hebrews 12:22-24, "You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect"), but Christ himself marks them afresh with his blood over each mansion he secures. Yes, he carries their names written in his heart, just as the high priest carried the names of the twelve tribes on his breast when entering the Holy of Holies. He sits in heaven to ensure that no one else occupies their places above them, so to speak. Thus, in 1 Peter 1:4, salvation is said to be

"kept in heaven for you," specifically reserved for them by Jesus Christ. Once, the fallen angels held positions there, but they were replaced by others, just as the land of Canaan was taken from the Canaanites. The reason for this is that they lacked a Christ to intercede for them, unlike us.

(2.) Secondly, to demonstrate his attentiveness to them and all other believers when he is in his glory, he informs them that once he has completed the necessary preparations in heaven for them and the entire elect who are to come, he intends to return to them himself. As stated in John 14:3, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again." This is a pure expression of love, as he could have chosen to send for them instead. However, he desires to personally come for them, even when he is at the pinnacle of his glory in heaven. He will temporarily leave the splendour to return to his beloved. And for what purpose? [1.] To see her: "I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice." [2.] To fetch her, as mentioned in John 14:3: "I will come again and receive you to myself." He conforms to the customs of bridegrooms, for despite his greatness, no lover can surpass him in displaying true love. It is customary for bridegrooms, after preparing everything in their father's house, to personally come and fetch their brides, rather than sending others, as it is a time for love. Love descends better than it ascends, and so does the love of Christ, who is, indeed, love itself. Therefore, he descends to us himself. "I will come again and receive you to myself," says Christ, "so that where I am, you may be also." The latter part of his statement provides the reason and reveals his complete affection. It is as if he were saying, "The truth is, I cannot live without you. I will never be at peace until I have you with me, so that we may never part again. That is the reason. Heaven and my Father's company cannot contain me if I do not have you with me. My heart is so devoted to you, and if I possess

any glory, you will share in it." As stated in John 14:19, "Because I live, you also will live." It is a reason and also a solemn affirmation. "As I live" is an oath of God, and "Because I live," declares Christ. He stakes his life on it and desires to live on no other terms. "He shall see his offspring" (Isaiah 53:10). Furthermore, to express the yearnings and longings of his heart for them during that time, he assures them that it will not be long before he returns to them. As stated in John 16:16, "A little while, and you will not see me; and again, a little while, and you will see me." The "not seeing him" does not refer to the short period of absence during his death and burial, but rather to the time after his final ascension, forty days after his resurrection, when he would no longer be visible on earth until the day of judgment. Yet, he says, "A little while, and you will see me again," specifically at the day of judgment. In Hebrews 10:37, it is written, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay." "As little as little may be." Although it may seem long in itself, it is as brief as possible in terms of his desire, with no delay in coming. He will not remain a moment longer than necessary; he waits only until he has completed all our tasks in heaven through his intercession. The doubling of the phrase "Coming he will come" indicates his intense desire to come and that his mind is constantly focused on it. He is always coming and can hardly be kept away. This Hebrew phrase also signifies urgency, intensity, and determination in an action, such as "I have earnestly waited," "I have fervently desired." Similarly, "coming he will come." And not content with these expressions of longing, he adds, "and will not delay," all to signify the infinite ardour of his heart towards his chosen ones below and his desire to have all his elect in heaven with him. He will not tarry a minute longer than necessary; he waits only until, through his intercession throughout all ages, he has prepared a place for each

saint, so that he may host them all together and have them all around him.

(3.) Thirdly, he expresses his affection towards them during his absence through the careful provision he makes and the arrangements he puts in place for their comfort. In John 14:18, he says, "I will not leave you as orphans" (that's what the word means). I will not abandon you like fatherless and friendless children, left in a state of confusion. My Father and I have only one true friend, who resides in the embrace of both of us and proceeds from both of us—the Holy Spirit. In the meantime, I will send him to you, just as a loving husband would entrust his wife to his dearest friend during his absence. That's what Christ does. In John 14:16, he says, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter." And in John 16:7, he says, "I will send him to you." This Comforter:

Firstly, will be a better source of comfort to you than I can be in this particular form of dispensation that binds me to you while I am on earth. As he intimates in John 16:7, "It is advantageous," he says, "for me to go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come." The Comforter, by virtue of his role, will comfort you more effectively than I could with my physical presence. And this Spirit, as the apostle describes, is both the "earnest of heaven" and the greatest sign and pledge of Christ's love ever given, a gift that "the world cannot receive." Yet,

Secondly, all the comfort he provides during that time will come from the expression of my heart towards you. Just as he does not come of his own accord but is sent by me, as stated in John 16:7, "He will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak," as mentioned in John 16:13. And in John 16:14, he says, "He

will take what is mine and declare it to you." I will purposefully send him to take my place and fulfill my role to you, my bride, my spouse, and he will reveal to you, if you are willing to listen and not grieve him, nothing but stories of my love. As it is said, "He will glorify me," specifically to you, because I am already glorified in heaven. All his words in your hearts will serve to exalt me and enhance my worth and love for you, and he will delight in doing so. He can come from heaven in an instant whenever he pleases, bringing you fresh news of my thoughts and sharing with you the very ideas I have of you at that very moment. He tells you what they are while I am still contemplating them.' That's why in 1 Corinthians 2:12, it is said that by "having the Spirit," we "have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16), for he dwells in the heart of Christ and also in ours, conveying to us what Christ's thoughts are and presenting our prayers and faith to Christ.

'So you will have my heart assuredly and swiftly, as if I were physically present with you. The Spirit will continually stir your hearts, either with my love for you, your love for me, or both. If either is present, you can be certain of my love. And although you currently have the Spirit dwelling in your hearts,' as stated in John 14:17, 'after my ascension, he will dwell in you to an even greater extent,' as mentioned in the following verses. On that day, as mentioned in John 14:20, 'you will know' (through his guidance) 'that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.' He will inform you, when I am in heaven, that there is a true connection between you and me, and a genuine affection in me towards you, just as there is between my Father and me. It will be impossible to sever this bond and to divert my heart away from you, just as it is impossible to separate my Father's heart from me or mine from my Father.'

Thirdly, you can be certain that what he conveys about my love for you is true, for 'he is the Spirit of truth,' as stated in John 16:13, as well as John 14:16-17, where Christ refers to him as a Comforter. Just as you believe me when I speak of my Father because I come from him, you can also believe everything he says about me and my love for you, for he comes from me.

However, one might ask, 'Won't he also leave us for a while, just as you have?' 'No,' says Christ in John 14:16, 'The Father will give you another Comforter, and he will remain with you forever.' Christ says this in contrast to himself. He had been their comforter, but now he was going to be absent. However, it is not the same for the Spirit. 'He will be with you forever.' Just as he is presently 'with you,' he will also be 'in you,' as stated in John 14:17.

In the fourth place, if this is not enough to assure them of how he would feel towards them, he assures them that he will provide them with daily experiences of it. Just test me, he says, when I am gone, and do so by sending me word on all occasions about what you would like me to do for you. I have left my Spirit to be your secretary and the composer of all your petitions. "So far you have asked nothing (or very little) in my name"—he reproaches them for not asking him to do more for them—"but now ask, and you will receive." And if you still won't believe, you will believe your own eyes; ask, and you will see immediate answers. Believe, and in doing so, believe in me, he says, "for the sake of the works" (John 14:11). He refers to the works he would perform for them in response to their prayers when he was gone, which would serve as epistles of his heart, responding to theirs. As it follows in John 14:12, "He who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father." It is evident that he speaks of the works

done after his ascension. And how were they to obtain and accomplish these works? Through prayer. As it follows in John 14:13, "And whatever you ask in my name, I will do it." He speaks of the time when he is gone. Furthermore, he says in John 14:14, "If you ask anything in my name, I will do it." Just let me hear from you, whether it's every week, every day, or every hour, you can be sure of an answer. "Open your mouths wide, and I will fill them" (Psalm 81:10). Your prayers will serve as continual tokens of your hearts towards me, and my answers will reflect the same towards you. And because Christ instructs them to direct their prayers to the Father, but to send them in his name, as stated in John 16:23, they may not clearly discern that his heart is in the answer to them, but only the Father's hand. Therefore, he adds twice in John 14, "I will do it, I will do it." He speaks as someone eager to act on their behalf, just as his Father is or should be, and as someone desiring them to know and take notice of his involvement. It is as if he is saying, even though you ask the Father in my name, everything goes through my hands, and I will do it—my hand must provide the authorization for everything that is done, and my heart will not be lacking.

In the fifth place, to further demonstrate his love, he not only instructs them to pray to him and in his name on all occasions, but he assures them that he himself will pray for them. Pay attention to how he conveys this message; it is in the most subtle and persuasive expressions that people use to convey their deepest care and determination to do something. John 16:26, he says, "In that day (referring to after his ascension) you will ask, and I do not say that I will pray to the Father for you;" no, not I. I mentioned it before; I am simply adding this clarification. It is a manner of speech used when one wants to express the greatest assurance and confidence in their love, "I do not love you, no, not I." It is expressing something by

stating its contrary, which emphasizes it the most. It is like saying to a person who has received the greatest favour imaginable, "You're terribly hurt." It is an expression similar to what Paul used with the Corinthians when he said, "I deceived you by trickery; forgive me for this wrong" (2 Corinthians 12:16). Similarly, Christ says here, "I do not say that I will pray for you," when in truth, it is the most important work he does in heaven. "He always lives to intercede" (Hebrews 7:25)—just as he lives eternally, he intercedes without ceasing and never remains silent until sinners are saved. However, the work of Christ in heaven is a topic that deserves and requires a separate and extensive discussion. I will not delve into it further at this moment, nor will I mention any more specifics from this sermon. Read through those three chapters (John 14, 15, 16), for in them you have the longest recorded sermon of his. He spent the most time on this subject compared to any other, because his heart was truly invested in it more than any other point he ever preached on.

However, if anyone objects and claims that he spoke all of this to his disciples to calm and reassure them, and that he may not have spoken in the same way if not for their distress...

In the sixth place, simply read the next chapter (John 17), and you will see that he immediately goes apart and alone to his Father and repeats everything he had said to them. He speaks as much about them behind their backs as he had spoken to their faces. Read it, and you will find that he was the same in his absence as he was when he was present with them. Therefore, he was not only sincere in what he had said, but his heart was truly filled with it. You know that chapter contains a prayer offered just before his suffering, and there he declares his will and his final request, for it is written in such a manner, "Father, I will" (John 17:24), which will he has gone to see

fulfilled in heaven. And it is true what Arminius said, that this prayer is left to us by Christ as a summary of his intercession for us in heaven. He spoke as he intended to do in heaven, as one who had completed his work and had now come to claim his reward; "I have finished the work which you gave me to do," he says (John 17:4). While he speaks a word or two for himself in the first five verses, he speaks five times as much for them, for the rest of the chapter is a prayer for them. He uses all sorts of arguments to persuade his Father on behalf of his children. "I have finished the work which you gave me to do," he says, and to save them is your work, which remains to be done for me by you. "They are yours, and you gave them to me," and I commend to you only what is already yours. "And all that is mine is yours, and yours is mine." He implies that he has not added anyone of his own accord, but uses all his influence only for those whom the Father has given him. And what a motive is this? And he declares that he will not plead for anyone else: "I do not pray for the world," he says, I will not utter a word for any sons of perdition; but I employ all my blood, prayers, and entire influence with you only for those whom you have given me. And, he says, even though you have granted me a personal glory which I had before the world existed, there is another glory that I consider almost as significant, and that is, their salvation. "I am glorified in them," he says (John 17:10), "and they are my joy" (John 17:13), and therefore I must have them with me wherever I am (John 17:24). You have set my heart upon them, and you have loved them just as you have loved me, and you have destined them to be one with us, just as we are one, and therefore I cannot live apart from them for long; I have your company, but I must have theirs too. "I want them to be with me where I am" (John 17:24). If I have any glory, they must share in it. As it continues in the aforementioned verse, "That they may behold

the glory which you have given me." He speaks all of this as if he were already in heaven, in possession of all that glory; and therefore, it is an expression of his heart in heaven, which gives you a solid foundation to rely upon.

Demonstrations from Passages and Expressions after His Resurrection

II. These examples have been drawn from his conduct and sermon before his death, even when he first revealed his thoughts to his disciples regarding his departure from them. Now let us observe our Saviour's behaviour after his resurrection, from which we can gather further evidence of his heart and how it would be towards sinners when he ascends to heaven. His resurrection marked the initial step towards his glory and indeed an entry into it. When he laid down his body, he relinquished all earthly weakness and the limitations of flesh and blood. "It was sown," just like ours, "in weakness," but upon being raised, he assumed the attributes and qualities of an immortal and glorious body, "it was raised in power." "The days of his flesh," or frail state, as the author of Hebrews distinguishes it, were over and done with at his resurrection. The garment of his body was renewed and imbued with new properties, making it suitable to bear and sustain the glory of heaven. Therefore, the disposition of his heart towards us upon his initial rising is a definite indication of what it will continue to be in heaven. To further illustrate this, consider that if there was ever a test to determine whether his love for sinners would endure, it was during his resurrection. During that time, all of his disciples (especially Peter) had behaved most unworthily towards him. This occurred precisely when he was demonstrating the greatest act of love towards them, namely, dying

for them, an act unparalleled in its display of love. By the way, this is often how God orchestrates things: when he is in the process of bestowing the greatest mercies upon us and bringing about our greatest good, that is when we commit the gravest sins against him. He does this to magnify his love even more. You know how they all abandoned him, and even in the midst of his agony in the garden, where he sought their company as a source of solace for his troubled spirit, they slept and remained completely oblivious to his sorrows, which they could never have done if they had any genuine empathy. "Could you not watch with me for one hour?" Furthermore, you are aware of how Peter shamefully denied him with oaths and curses. And after his burial, they lost all faith in him, saying, "We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel." They doubted whether he was the Messiah or not (Luke 24:21).

Now when Christ first emerged from the realm of the dead, clothed with the heart and body he would wear in heaven, what message did he send to them first? One would think that just as they did not recognize him in his suffering, he would now be as unfamiliar to them in his glory. Or at the very least, his first words would be to rebuke them for their lack of faith and their betrayals. But that is not the case here. In John 20:17, his initial words concerning them are, "Go tell my brethren." Elsewhere, you read about how it is considered a great display of love and humility for Christ to address them as brethren (Hebrews 2:11), for surely his brethren had been ashamed of him. Yet, for him to still call them brethren as he entered into his glory indicates even greater love within him towards them. He handles it in a manner similar to Joseph when he revealed himself to his brothers amidst his exalted status. "I am Joseph, your brother," he said (Genesis 45:4). Likewise, Christ says here, "Tell them that you have seen Jesus, their brother; I still acknowledge

them as brethren.' This was his first form of address. But what was the message that he wanted to convey to them first? "I ascend to my Father and your Father," he says. It is a much more amicable statement, signifying infinite love compared to Joseph's words (although Joseph's were filled with compassion), for after Joseph revealed himself as their brother, he added, "whom you sold into Egypt," reminding them of their unkindness. Yet, Christ does not utter a word about what they had done to him. Poor sinners, plagued by thoughts of their own sins, do not know how they will be able to face Christ when they first encounter him on the last day. But they can find solace in the way Christ now treats his disciples, who had sinned so grievously against him. Do not be afraid, "your sins will he remember no more." Furthermore, you may observe that he does not emphasize what he had done for them. He does not say, 'Tell them I have been dying for them,' or 'They have no idea the suffering I endured for them.' Not a word of that either. Instead, his heart and concern are focused on doing more. He does not dwell on the past, but rather forgets his sufferings, like a woman forgetting her labour pains because of the joy of giving birth to a child. Having now completed that monumental task on earth for them, he hastens to heaven as quickly as he can to undertake another. Although he knew he still had business to attend to on earth, which would keep him there for another forty days, he speaks in the present tense to demonstrate his longing and eagerness to work for them in heaven. He tells them, "I ascend," and expresses his joy not only in going to "my Father," but also in going to "your Father," to act as their advocate before him, as I mentioned earlier. Is Jesus, our brother, truly alive? Does he call us brethren? And does he speak of us with such affection? Whose heart would not be overwhelmed by this?

But that was merely a message sent to his disciples before he met them. Let us now observe his behavior and words when he gathered with them. When he first came among them, his greeting was, "Peace be to you" (John 20:19), which he repeats in John 20:21. It is in line with his previous statement in his farewell sermon, "My peace I leave with you." After this, he "breathes on them" and imparts the Holy Spirit to them to a greater extent, providing evidence of what he would do more abundantly in heaven. The act of breathing on them symbolized that this was the utmost expression of his heart—to give them the Spirit—and that it emanated from the very core of his being, just as a person's breath does. It also signifies that the Holy Spirit proceeds from him as well as from the Father. The purpose of giving them the Spirit is not solely for their own benefit, but so that they, through the gift and assistance of the Spirit, may forgive men's sins by leading them to conversion. "Whose sins you remit"—through your ministry—"are remitted to them." As you can see, his focus is still on sinners and his concern for the conversion of their souls. In another Gospel, specifically Mark, his last recorded words are: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:15). In Luke 24:46-47, his final words on earth that are recorded there are: "Thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise...that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations," and he adds, "beginning at Jerusalem," where he had been crucified just a few days earlier. One would have thought that he would have excluded Jerusalem and instructed them to bypass it, but he tells them to begin there. Let those who participated in my death be the first to partake of the first fruits and benefits resulting from it. Furthermore, he says, "Behold, I send the Promise of my Father" (Luke 24:49). On another occasion, he appears to two of them, and

indeed he rebukes them, saying, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart!" but why? Only because they did not believe in him. It was not for any other sin or for having abandoned him. Therefore, he continues, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe" (Luke 24:25), because he rejoices when we believe, as seen in John 11:16. After that, he appears to all eleven disciples and reproaches them, according to the text, but with what? It is with their "unbelief and hardness of heart," still because they did not believe (Mark 16:14). No other sin troubled him except their unbelief, which reveals how his heart is inclined towards desiring that men believe in him, even now that he is glorified. Later, he encounters Thomas and barely scolds him for his blatant unbelief, only remarking that it was good that "having seen, he believed." Yet, he pronounces those "blessed who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29), and Thomas is gently reproved. Another time, he reveals himself to his disciples and specifically engages with Peter, but he does not utter a word about Peter's sins or his act of denying him. Instead, he seeks to draw from Peter a declaration of his love for himself. "Peter," he says, "do you love me?" Christ loves to hear those words. They sound pleasing to his ears when you tell him that you love him, even though he already knows it. Just as Peter says, "You know all things, you know that I love you" (John 21:15), and Christ repeats this question three times. What was Christ's intention in drawing this declaration of love from Peter? It was that if Peter truly loved him, as he professed, and would always demonstrate it, then he should "feed his lambs." This is the greatest testimony of love that he would have Peter display when he [Christ] would be in heaven, and it is the final charge he gives to Peter. This testimony reveals the profound effect on his own heart and his utmost concern. His heart is wholly devoted to his lambs, to souls in need of conversion. He had previously said, "I have other sheep

which are not of this fold; them also I must bring" (John 10:16), leaving the task to his apostles. But this expression here is more moving and affectionate, for sheep can fend for themselves, whereas helpless little lambs cannot. Therefore, Christ says to Peter, "Feed my lambs," just as John expresses greater love to those he writes to and calls them "my little children." Why does the evangelist record these events after his resurrection? One of the evangelists who recorded them informs us. In John 20:30, it is stated that "Jesus did many other signs" after his resurrection. These events, not all of which are documented in this book, are partly recorded by other evangelists and partly concealed. However, "these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ," so that you may approach him as the Messiah, the Savior of the world. Therefore, most of the recorded incidents serve to demonstrate Christ's heart and conduct towards sinners, that we may believe in him and "by believing, have life in his name."

Demonstrations from Passages at and after His Ascension into Heaven.

III. Let's now observe his behavior during his ascension; even that will further assure our hearts of this. Luke 24:50 states, "He lifted up his hands and blessed them." And to emphasize it, and for us to take note of it as having great significance, Luke 24:51 adds, "While he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven." Christ reserved this benediction as his final act. Its meaning was to

bless them, just as God blessed Adam and Eve, commanding them to "increase and multiply," and thus blessing all mankind who would come from them. In blessing his disciples, Christ blesses all those who will believe through their word until the end of the world. I only add this for further clarification: Peter interpreted this mystery in Acts 3:26 when he spoke to the Jews, saying, "To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you" (and how?) "in turning every one of you from your wicked ways," and thus forgiving them. For "blessed is the one whose sin is forgiven." This is a demonstration of his ascending.

IV. Next, let us consider what Christ did when he arrived in heaven and was exalted there. How abundantly did he fulfill all that he had promised in his last sermon!

Firstly, he immediately poured out his Spirit, and that "abundantly" (as the apostle to Titus says). "Being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear," says the apostle in his first sermon after the ascension (Acts 2:33). Christ received the Spirit and visibly poured Him out. Additionally, in Ephesians 4:8, it is stated, "He ascended on high and gave gifts to men...for the work of ministry" (Ephesians 4:15), "...and for equipping the saints for the work of ministry" (Ephesians 4:16), that is, for the conversion of chosen sinners and making them saints. Some of the mentioned gifts still remain to this day in pastors and teachers. This Spirit is still present in our preaching and in your hearts, in hearing and in prayer. He persuades you of Christ's love even to this day and serves as a pledge of the continuity of Christ's love in heaven towards sinners. All our sermons and your prayers are evidence to you that Christ's heart towards sinners remains the same as it has always

been, for the Spirit, who assists in all these, comes in Christ's name and works by His commission. Do any of you not feel your hearts moved when these things are preached at this and other times? And who is it that moves you? It is the Spirit who speaks in Christ's name from heaven, just as Christ Himself is said to "speak from heaven" (Hebrews 12:25). When you pray, it is the Spirit who inspires your prayers and "intercedes for you" in your own hearts (Romans 8:26). This intercession of the Spirit is the evidence and echo of Christ's intercession in heaven. The Spirit prays in you because Christ prays for you. He is an intercessor on earth because Christ is an intercessor in heaven. Just as he took Christ's words and used them when he spoke to the disciples the words of life, he also takes from Christ's prayers when he prays in us. He takes the very words, as it were, out of Christ's mouth or rather heart, and directs our hearts to offer them up to God. He also accompanies us to the sacrament and, in that reflection, shows us Christ's face smiling upon us, and through His face, His heart. By helping us see Him, we depart rejoicing that we saw our Savior that day.

Then, secondly, all those works, both miracles and the conversion of sinners in response to the apostles' prayers, serve as evidence of this. Just consider the impact of Peter's first sermon after Christ's ascension, where three thousand souls were converted! The apostles, as you know, continued to preach forgiveness through Christ and in His name, inviting people to Him. And what signs and wonders accompanied their preaching to confirm it! All of these were the fruits of Christ's intercession in heaven. Thus, what He promised in John 14:12, as proof of His concern for them in heaven, was abundantly fulfilled. Upon their request, they did "greater works than He" (John 14:12), as seen in Acts 4:29-30 during Peter's prayers. In Hebrews 2:3-4, the apostle presents it as an argument,

stating, "How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard Him, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles." Additionally, consider this: the entire New Testament, with all its promises and expressions of Christ's love, was written after Christ's ascension, by His Spirit, and under His commission. Therefore, everything you find in it can be relied upon as His very heart. Through it, you can see that what He once said on earth, He does not retract a single word now that He is in heaven—His intentions remain unchanged. Reflecting on this can greatly strengthen our faith in this regard.

Thirdly, some of the apostles had conversations with Him even many years after His ascension. Both John and Paul, with the latter being in heaven with Him, testify to the same truth.

Paul did not hear a single sermon from Christ while on earth (at least not that he was aware of) and did not receive the gospel from any man, apostle or otherwise. Instead, he received it directly through the immediate revelation of Jesus Christ from heaven, as he states in Galatians 1:11-12. His conversion came directly from Christ Himself, speaking and conversing with him from heaven, long after His ascension. In that one instance, Christ abundantly demonstrated His heart and His intention to extend salvation to all types of sinners until the end of the world. Paul declares this in two places. The first is in 1 Timothy 1:13, where he says, "I was a persecutor, a blasphemer, but I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, overflowed for me." And based on this, he openly proclaims, as if from Christ Himself speaking from heaven, that this is "a trustworthy saying, deserving full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of

whom I am the foremost" (1 Timothy 1:15). To demonstrate that this was precisely Christ's purpose in converting Paul himself, and also Paul's intention in that passage to Timothy, it becomes evident in what follows: 1 Timothy 1:16 states, "But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life." It is explicit, you see, assuring all sinners until the end of the world of Christ's heart towards them. This was the goal. "For this very reason..." says Paul.

The second piece of evidence I present to support this is the account of Paul's conversion, where he carefully includes the very words spoken to him by Christ from heaven (Acts 26:16-18). Christ said to him, "I have appeared to you for this purpose: to appoint you as a servant and witness...to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." Brethren, these are the words of Christ since His ascent to heaven, and He tells Paul that He appeared to him to testify to these things. This is regarding Paul's encounter with Him.

Furthermore, sixty years after His ascension, the apostle John received a revelation from Him, even after all the other apostles had died. For it was after their deaths that the book of Revelation was written, and it is said to be, in a more immediate sense, "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:1) compared to any other writings by the apostles. You read that Christ Himself appeared to John and said, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive forever and ever!" (Revelation 1:18). Now let us consider Christ's final words in this last book, the most recent words He has

spoken since ascending to heaven and the words He will utter until the day of judgment. They can be found in Revelation 22:16-17: "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David...The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let the one who hears say, 'Come!' Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life." I specifically cite these latter words in this context. The occasion for these words was as follows: Christ was now in heaven, having previously promised to return and take us all to heaven. In the meantime, observe the reciprocal calling and desire between Him in heaven and believing sinners on earth. Earth calls upon heaven, and heaven calls upon earth, as the prophet says. The bride on earth says to Christ, "Come to me," and the Spirit in the hearts of the saints below also says "Come" to Him. In response to their desire, Christ loudly cries out from heaven, "Come," inviting them to come to Him for mercy. They cannot desire His coming to them as much as He desires their coming to Him. Now, what does this mean, that upon their invitation for Him to come, He should likewise call upon them to come? In essence, it is as if He plainly expressed Himself in this way: "I have a heart to come to you, but I must have all My elect on earth come to Me first. You want Me to come down to you, but I must remain here until all those whom the Father has given Me come to Me. Then you can be sure that I will be with you quickly." This clearly demonstrates how much His heart longs for them. This meaning is evident from the words He adds in Revelation 22:20: "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.'" Furthermore, if we observe how these words of Christ are presented, almost incidentally, it makes them even more remarkable, highlighting His heart in uttering them. This book was primarily intended as a prophecy of the gospel era until His return. When John

concluded that prophetic account, he portrays the bride longing for the coming of Christ: "The bride says, 'Come.'" And as soon as she utters these words, Christ, by way of response, also says "Come" to her. In fact, it is noteworthy that He had previously spoken the same words in Revelation 21:6, yet He chooses to repeat them again and make them His final words. All of this demonstrates how much His heart is focused on inviting sinners to Him. When He is about to speak just one more sentence until the day of judgment, He specifically selects these words. Therefore, let them forever remain with you, as they are worthy to be your final thoughts when you face death or when you are about to go to Him. He does say something else afterward, but it serves to affirm these words and the rest of the Scriptures, of which this is the primary message. Moreover, to emphasize that these words were chosen as His last and that He intends not to speak further until the day of judgment, He adds a curse to anyone who "adds to them or takes away from them." Indeed, He does speak again after that, but it is merely to reiterate His willingness to come quickly if all His elect would come to Him (Revelation 22:20). All of this assures us that this is truly His heart, and we will find Him of no other mind until His second coming.

And to emphasize that these words were deliberately chosen by Him as His final words, so that they may remain with us, let me make another observation about them. It is this: on another occasion when He was on earth, He similarly singled out the very essence of these words as the conclusion of His preaching after many days. In John 7:37, it is written, "On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.'" These words were spoken on the "last day of the festival," after which He would not preach to them anymore for a considerable time. He had already preached on all the preceding

days of the festival, as was His custom. And on the "great day of the festival," when He had the largest audience, He chose this sentence as the conclusion of His last sermon. It was His parting gift to them, something for them to take home and ponder above all else. These were His words: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink." He Himself explains that this means believing in Him (John 7:38). He stood up and proclaimed it, even crying out with utmost fervor, so that everyone could hear it above all other sayings. Similarly, at this present time, when He will speak no more and will remain silent until the day of judgment, and when He will not write any more Scriptures, He sends His angel to testify that these are His final words, even though He had spoken them before. This was undoubtedly done to reveal His heart in these words. They were His last words then, and they shall be mine as I bring this discourse to a close, for what more can be added to them?

Part II: The Evil of Affliction and the Evil of Sin

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.—Hebrews 4:15.

The only purpose I will use these words for is as a foundation for the second part of the doctrine I have introduced, which is to demonstrate the gracious inclination and disposition of Christ's heart towards sinners now that He is in heaven.

II. The external demonstrations of this, which I have addressed as the first part, have been discussed. As a basis for the more internal demonstrations, which form the second part, I have chosen this text because it speaks most deeply of His heart and reveals the nature and workings of His heart towards sinners. It does so in such a palpable way that it feels as if it guides our hands to rest upon Christ's chest and allows us to feel the beat of His heart and the compassion He has for us, even now that He is in glory. The purpose of these words is evidently to encourage believers against anything that may discourage them, by considering Christ's heart towards them in heaven.

Let me explain these words insofar as they serve my present purpose.

First, everything that may discourage us is referred to here as "infirmities," encompassing both:

1. The hardships of afflictions, regardless of their nature, including persecutions from external sources.
2. The burden of sins, which is often the greatest source of discouragement, originating from within.

It is clear that both these aspects are implied:

1. It is evident that "infirmities" refers to persecutions and afflictions, not only because the term is frequently used in that sense, as seen in 2 Corinthians 11:30 and 2 Corinthians 12:5, but also because the phrase is clearly intended here. The purpose is to provide comfort against anything that may cause believers to abandon their faith, as indicated by the preceding exhortation, "Let us hold fast our profession." The forces that attempt to

draw them away include persecutions and opposition from external sources. This is further supported by the fact that the argument to console them against these infirmities is based on Christ's example of being tempted in every way as we are.

2. Secondly, the term "infirmities" also encompasses sins, as mentioned later in this discourse, and it is the primary focus of our compassionate high priest. In the subsequent verses (Hebrews 5:2), the qualifications of the high priests under the law are explained, as they served as types of our great high priest. It is stated that the high priest should be able to show compassion towards the ignorant and those who have gone astray, which refers to sinners, as sins represent ignorance and straying from God. It is then added that Christ Himself was "clothed with infirmities," that is, with sins. Although it is stated here that Christ was without sin in all aspects, He was tempted by Satan to commit all kinds of sins, just as we are. The emphasis on sins as the main aspect of these "infirmities" becomes even more evident from the remedy proposed against them, which believers are encouraged to seek at the throne of grace: grace and mercy. Therefore, we are urged to come boldly to the throne of grace to find grace and mercy that can help us in our time of need. Grace helps us overcome the power of sin, while mercy addresses the guilt and punishment associated with it. These two aspects of sin are the greatest obstacles that discourage us from approaching the throne of grace. Thus, it is clear that the encouragement and comfort provided here primarily relate to these types of infirmities.

Moving on, the author emphasises how deeply and sensitively Christ's heart is affected by sinners under all their infirmities now

that He is in heaven. The context makes it evident that the author is speaking of Christ's exalted position in heaven (Hebrews 4:14). By introducing this narrative, the author aims to address a potential objection that may arise in people's minds due to the high and glorious description of Christ provided in Hebrews 4:14: "We have a great high priest who has passed into the heavens." The author anticipates that we might think He is too great to serve as a high priest for us and that His greatness may cause Him to forget us or hinder His ability to feel compassion towards us. It could be assumed that since He has entered heaven and shed the frailties of His earthly flesh, clothed in such immense glory, He may no longer be able to pity us as He did when He dwelt among us on earth. It might seem that He is no longer capable of being deeply moved and touched by our sufferings, and therefore, unable to show us compassionate understanding and sympathy. This notion suggests that He is now immune to experiencing grief or being able to empathise with us. His present state and condition transcend such emotions, which, despite being the very ones that should compel Him to wholeheartedly assist us, would be considered weaknesses or infirmities. His power and glory are so great that He cannot be affected in the same way, just as the angels are not. He has been exalted far above all principalities and powers (Ephesians 1:21).

The apostle addresses and preempts this objection. "We have not a high priest who cannot," etc. A double negation serves to affirm; in fact, two negatives not only make an affirmative, but they affirm even more strongly. They create an affirmation that contradicts the contrary and opposing thought. Essentially, the apostle is saying, "Well, regardless of the alterations heaven may have made to his condition, glorifying his human nature, even if it is free from earthly passions and transformed to be like heaven, even if he is incapable of

being influenced from below, there is still a tender part and vulnerable place in his heart, as if it remains unarmed, to suffer with you and to be touched if you are." The word used here is profound. He suffers with you, he is as compassionate towards you as ever he was. He can be moved to pity you. He is willing to endure, so to speak, that one place in his heart remains exposed and vulnerable, still bearing the essence of flesh, so that he can be wounded by your sufferings and be your merciful high priest.

It might be objected that this vulnerability represents weakness. The apostle asserts that this is his power, a manifestation of perfect and strong love within him, as indicated by the word *δυνάμενον*, which signifies his ability and strength to embrace our miseries within his glorified heart and be deeply affected by them, as if he were suffering alongside us. This allows him to provide relief, motivated by the same principles that would move him to alleviate his own suffering.

This passage leads me to observe and address two aspects separately.

Firstly, in a general sense, that Christ's heart in heaven is as graciously inclined towards sinners as it was on earth.

Secondly, more specifically, the manner in which this occurs. Or to put it differently:

1. He is moved with empathy and sympathy towards us, as the word implies.
2. The means by which this is achieved is through his experience of being tempted in every way, just like us. When addressing the first aspect, I will present the intrinsic demonstrations that support this doctrine, branching out from these words and

naturally stemming from them. Then, while discussing the second aspect, I will delve further into the text. So, let us now turn to those intrinsic demonstrations of this doctrine, which I base on these words, and naturally derive from them: namely, that the heart of Jesus Christ, now that he is in heaven, is as graciously inclined towards sinners as it was on earth.

The first type of intrinsic demonstrations come from the influence that all three Persons have on the heart of Christ's human nature in heaven.

I. The first set of demonstrations will be derived from each of the three Persons and their individual influence on Christ's heart in heaven, inclining it towards us.

1. The first demonstration is derived from God the Father, who has exalted Christ, and it consists of two parts: (1) God has given Christ a perpetual command to love sinners, and (2) as a result, His heart remains unchanged forever.

(1) Firstly, God the Father has given Jesus Christ a specific command to love sinners, and He has instilled a merciful and gracious disposition in His heart towards them. I mention this as evidence because Christ himself mentions it in John 6:37 as the original basis for His disposition "not to cast out those who come to Him." He says, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me," in the following verses (John 6:38). This command from the Father remains upon Him even now in heaven, just as strongly as before. In fact, His will is that He should raise them up on the last day, as stated in John 6:39-40, so this disposition must necessarily continue until then. We can also see this in John 10:15-18, where Christ discusses His care and love for His

sheep, being willing to give His life for them, to know and acknowledge them, and to bring them into the fold. He concludes by saying, "This command I have received from My Father" (John 10:18). In other words, it is the Father's will, and if a good son knows his father's mind and will, it is enough to motivate him to fulfill it, especially if it is an explicit command. In John 10, Christ further emphasizes that it is the command He received from the Father. A command is the expressed will of someone, and it must be fulfilled; otherwise, it would be a violation. Thus, God has given Christ a command concerning us. From both of these passages, I observe three aspects that make up the content of God's will and command regarding sinners.

Firstly, Christ's command was to die for His sheep. In accordance with this command, He loved them so much during His time on earth that He laid down His life for them (John 10:15). However, He also took His life up again and ascended into heaven. Therefore, the other two commands given to Him are still relevant to Him in His glory. The second command is to receive all who come to Him, and the third is to ensure that He does not lose any of those for whom He died, but rather raise them up. Even in heaven, His Father's command remains as strict for Him as the command to die for them was while He was on earth. He affirms, "This command I have received from my Father, and this is His will."

In addition to this command, God has instilled in His heart, as He often does when giving commands, an extraordinary instinct of love towards them. It is an instinct that inclines Him so strongly to fulfill it that He requires no further commands. God has placed in Him such a *στοργή*, such a unique love, as parents have for their own children, surpassing their love for other people's children, even if

those children are more beautiful and intelligent than their own. Both this commandment and this inclination of love towards sinners are expressed together in Psalm 40:8. When explaining the reason why He became our Mediator and sacrificed Himself, He not only says, "I come to do Your will, O God," but also declares, "Your law is in my bowels." In this statement, both aspects are mentioned:

1. The command I mentioned is expressed there, as it is referred to as a law.
2. It is a law that has been deeply ingrained in His heart, which is referred to as a "law in His heart" or bowels.

You can easily understand what law it is by considering its subject, His bowels, which symbolize the most tender affections. In Colossians 3:12, it is referred to as "bowels of mercy [kindness]." This law is none other than the law of love, mercy, and compassion towards poor sinners, which God entrusted to Him as the Mediator. It is the special law that governed Him as the "second Adam," similar to the law given to the first Adam, not to eat the forbidden fruit, but it goes beyond the moral law. This is the law He speaks of. It is the law of His role as Mediator and sacrifice, as He expressly mentions in Hebrews 8:6-7, in addition to the moral law that applies to both Him and us. The original text states, "In the midst of my bowels," to emphasize that it was deeply engraved. It resided at the core, closest and most inward part of His heart.

Yes, just as the special law of not eating the forbidden fruit was given to Adam as a symbolic precept, as theologians call it, in addition to the Ten Commandments, to test and symbolize his obedience to all the other commandments, the same kind of law was given to Christ, the second Adam. God would judge all His obedience to Himself

based on this commandment. Indeed, it was laid upon Him by God with such earnestness and commendation that if Christ wanted God to love Him, He should make sure to love us. In the previously mentioned passage, John 10:17-18, Christ finds comfort in His obedience, saying, "Therefore, does my Father love me." This statement is made in relation to His fulfillment of the aforementioned command, and it implies that if Christ showed love to us, God would love Him even more, for He was pleased to see Christ loving us. It is as if God, when giving Christ that commandment in John 10:18, said, "Son, if you want my love to continue towards you, show me your love by being kind to those whom I have given you, whom I have loved with the same love with which I have loved you," as mentioned in John 17:23. Just as God desires us to show love to Him by loving His children, He also wants Christ to show His love for Him by loving us.

Now, regarding the second aspect of this demonstration, it is certain that the love which Christ expressed in His heart while on earth and which led Him to die for sinners upon His Father's command still remains in His heart now that He is in heaven. It is as alive and tender as it was on earth, even when He was on the cross, and this is because of His Father's command. The evidence lies in the fact that it is a law written in the core of His being by His Father, making it natural and indelible. Just like other moral laws of God written in the heart, it is perpetual. Just as love will continue in us when we are in heaven, even when faith and hope fade away, as the apostle says, this love also continues in Christ's heart. It suffers no decline and is demonstrated through His reception of sinners, His intercession for them, and His compassion towards them, just as it was shown when He died for them. Since this love for sinners was so strictly commanded and emphasized, and as it is closely tied to the great

love between Him and His Father, it not only generates a strong love for sinners within Him but also the most steadfast and unwavering love imaginable. This is supported by the analogy of the principle by which Christ urges us to love Him in John 15:10. He encourages His disciples to "keep the commandments" He has given them and uses the argument, "For by doing this you will abide in My love," supporting it with His own example, saying, "Just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Therefore, since this is the paramount commandment that God has given Him - to love, die for, and continue to love and receive sinners who come to Him, and to raise them up on the last day - He undoubtedly continues to keep it most faithfully. It is one of the strong bonds between Him and His Father, ensuring that He remains in His love. As He continues to abide in His Father's love, and now that He is in heaven and at His right hand, He must undoubtedly remain in the highest favour with Him. Therefore, we can be sure that He both loves us and will continue to do so forever. Oh, what a comfort it is that just as children are mutual pledges and ties of love between a husband and wife, we have been made such between God the Father and the Son! This demonstration is derived from the influence of the first person of the Trinity, namely, God the Father.

2. Secondly, his love towards us is not a forced love, something he strives to bear towards us only because his Father has commanded him to do so. Instead, it is his nature, his disposition. This adds another demonstration to the point at hand and is derived from God the Son. This disposition is free and inherent to him; otherwise, he would not be God's Son, nor would he resemble his heavenly Father, to whom it is natural to show mercy rather than to punish. Punishment is His unusual

work, but mercy brings Him pleasure. He is the "Father of mercies," naturally generating them.

Now, Christ is His own Son, as he is distinctly referred to, and his Son by nature. Moreover, his human nature, united to the second person, has become the natural Son of God, not adopted like us. If he is the natural Son, then his Father's qualities are natural to him, even more so than to us, who are only adopted sons. And if we, as the chosen ones of God, who are adopted sons, are urged to "put on bowels of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness" (Colossians 3:12), then these dispositions must be even more essential in Christ, the natural Son. They are not something he puts on, but they are as natural to him as his Sonship. John states that "God is love," and Christ is love clothed in flesh, yes, our flesh.

Furthermore, it is certain that just as God has formed the hearts of all people, and some individuals naturally possess more mercy and compassion than others, and when the Holy Spirit comes upon them to sanctify their natural dispositions, He works in accordance with their temperament. Similarly, it is certain that He tempered the heart of Christ and made it of a softer mould and temperament than the tenderness of all human hearts combined. When he was to assume a human nature, he is quoted as saying, "A body hast thou prepared for me" (Hebrews 10:5), referring to a human nature prepared, not only in other aspects but also in its disposition, for the Godhead to work in and display its perfections in the best way. He took on a human nature with the purpose of being a merciful high priest (Hebrews 2:14), a human nature of such a special temperament and composition that it could be more merciful than that of all men or angels. His human nature was "made without hands," meaning it was not of the ordinary constitution of other human hearts. Though

made of the same substance, its spiritual frame was different. It was a heart specifically designed to be a vessel, or rather a fountain, of mercy. It was wide and capable enough to extend itself and receive all the manifest mercies of God, and then pour them out again to us, the elect, for whom God intended to reveal His mercy.

And therefore, Christ's heart naturally possessed more compassion in its temperament than all men or angels, as it was through this heart that the great God's mercies were to be dispensed to us. This heart of his was the instrument of those mercies. And when this man, with his heart so formed, became united with God and made the natural Son of God, mercy must naturally be inherent in him and continue within him now that he is in heaven. Although he shed all the weaknesses of our nature when he rose again, the graces that were in him while he was on earth remain just as much in him now. Being part of his nature, and since we know that nature is constant, they still persist.

You can observe that when he was on earth and sought to persuade sinners to think well of him, he used the argument of his Father's command given to him. He also revealed his own disposition, as stated in Matthew 11:28: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, for I am gentle and humble in heart."

People tend to hold contrary opinions about Christ, but he reveals his disposition there to counter such misconceptions and attract them to him even more. We are prone to think that because he is so holy, he must have a severe and harsh disposition towards sinners and be unable to tolerate them. No, he says, "I am gentle." Gentleness is my nature and temperament. Just as it was with Moses, who was his type in that grace among other things, he did not seek revenge on

Miriam and Aaron but interceded for them. Similarly, Christ says that injuries and unkindness do not have such an effect on him as to make him irreconcilable. It is in his nature to forgive. "I am gentle." However, we may think that as the Son of God and the heir of heaven, especially now filled with glory and seated at God's right hand, he may look down upon our lowliness here below. Although not out of anger, he may consider us too insignificant for him to marry or be familiar with. Surely, he has higher thoughts and does not pay attention to such poor, lowly beings like us. So, although we conceive him to be gentle and unaffected by injuries, he may be too exalted and lofty to condescend and take to heart the condition of poor creatures. No, says Christ, "I am lowly" as well, willing to bestow my love and favour upon the poorest and humblest.

Furthermore, all of this is not a mere show of an affable disposition, nor is it merely external in his facial expression and outward demeanor like many high-ranking individuals who appear gentle and courteous. Rather, all of this exists in his heart. It is his temperament, disposition, and nature to be gracious, and he can never cast aside this nature. It is evident that his greatness, when he experiences it in heaven, would not alter his disposition in the slightest. This is evident because at the very moment he uttered these words, he also considered his future glory and expressed both that and his meekness simultaneously. In Matthew 11:27, he states, "All things have been committed to me by my Father." And immediately after, he declares, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened... for I am gentle and humble in heart" (Matthew 11:28-29).

Therefore, consider the lovely, sweet, and delightful thoughts you often have about a dear friend who possesses an amiable nature, or

about an exceptionally holy or meek saint. You might think to yourself, "I could entrust my soul to such a person and place my salvation in their hands," as I have heard some say. Or think about how encouraged we would be to seek forgiveness from Moses, who was the meekest man on earth, or to interact with Joseph, based on what we read about his compassion towards his brothers. Consider the tender hearts of Paul and Timothy in their ministry of begetting and nurturing souls, as Paul says, "Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to impart our own souls to you" (1 Thessalonians 2:8). And this affection is "natural," as he puts it in Philippians 2:20. If we have such raised apprehensions and infinitely more towards these individuals, we should have even greater ones towards the sweetness and candour that is found in Jesus Christ, as it is much more natural to him.

Therefore, the same apostle makes Christ's bowels a pattern for his own, stating, "God is my witness, how greatly I long after you in the bowels of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:8). According to interpreters, the phrase "in the bowels of Christ" has two meanings, both of which serve to illustrate my point.

Firstly, "in the bowels of Christ" is taken causally, as if the apostle meant to show that those bowels or compassions were infused into him by Christ. Therefore, he longed after others with the same kind of bowels that Christ had worked in him. If Christ put such bowels in him, then Christ must possess them even more. Paul had reason to say "in the bowels of Christ," for (in this sense) I am certain that he barely had the heart and bowels of a man within him when he was outside of Christ. How furious and lion-like was his spirit against the saints, causing great havoc among them, even to the point of tearing out their bowels! How did Paul develop such tender bowels towards

them? Who instilled such tender affections in him? It was Jesus Christ who transformed him from a lion into a lamb. Therefore, if these bowels were not natural to Paul, but rather the opposite, and yet they abounded in him naturally, as he himself says, how much more must they necessarily abound in Christ, who possesses them inherently and by nature?

Secondly, "in the bowels" can be understood as an instance, meaning "like the bowels" or "after the bowels," according to the analogy of Hebrew expression. In this sense, the meaning is that just as the bowels of Jesus Christ yearn after you, so do mine. "Bowels" are a metaphor used to signify tender and motherly affections and mercies, as seen in Luke 1:78 where it speaks of "the tender mercies." Thus, when Paul wanted to express the tenderness of his affections, he referred to the bowels of Jesus Christ (taking Christ as his pattern in everything, saying, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ"). How eager was this great apostle to bring people to Christ! He did not care about anything else he might lose as long as he could win some souls. He did not consider his own life or even his own salvation as precious, but rather, he wished to be accursed for the sake of his brethren, who were at that time the greatest enemies of Christ on earth. How joyful he was when a soul came to faith! How sorrowful when anyone fell away! He describes it as "going through the anguish of childbirth again" (to express the anxiety he felt for the Galatians) until Christ was formed in them. How comforted he was when he heard about the steadfastness and growth of their faith (1 Thessalonians 3:6-7), and he even said, "For now we live, if you stand firm in the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 3:8). Read all of his letters and understand his spirit in this way. Then, look up to Christ's human nature in heaven and think to yourselves, "Such a man is Christ." The expressions of affection from Paul are but a faint echo of

the deep emotions in Christ's bowels in heaven. They are natural to Christ, and he possesses them to an even greater extent and in infinite measure. This is the second demonstration, drawn from his own natural disposition as the Son of God.

A third demonstration arises from the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. If the same Spirit that was upon Jesus and within Him while He was on earth continues to rest upon Him now that He is in heaven, then these gracious dispositions must necessarily remain within Him.

This demonstration consists of two interconnected propositions: (1.) The Holy Spirit, dwelling in Him, contributes to His kind-heartedness towards sinners; and (2.) The same Spirit dwells and remains in Him forever in heaven.

(1.) Regarding the first proposition: it was the Spirit who overshadowed His mother and established the unbreakable bond between our human nature and the second person of the Trinity, and it was the same Spirit that bound His heart to us. The Spirit sanctified Him in the womb and rested upon Him in abundance, equipping Him with a meek spirit for the works of His mediation. Indeed, it was for the sake of this very grace of meekness that the Spirit came upon Him in a special manner. Therefore, at His baptism, when He was officially inaugurated into His role as the Mediator (for it was at that moment that He visibly and openly began to fulfill His mission), the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. How did this happen? As a dove, as all the evangelists unanimously testify. But why did the Spirit assume the form of a dove? Every apparition that God has ever made was not primarily to reveal His essence, but rather to demonstrate His disposition towards us and to reveal the

effects He produces in us. Thus, the appearance of a dove resting upon Jesus was meant to symbolize those special gracious qualities by which the Holy Spirit prepared Jesus Christ to be the Mediator. As you know, a dove is the most innocent and gentle creature, without gall or talons, devoid of fierceness, and expressing nothing but love and companionship towards its mate in all its actions. It mourns with its mate in times of distress. Therefore, the dove was a fitting symbol to represent the frame and temperament of spirit that the Holy Spirit instilled in the heart of Christ when He descended upon Him. This occurred without measure, so that just as doves lovingly interact with one another, sympathizing and mourning together, we may do the same with Christ, for He sympathizes with us in this way. Although He had the Spirit within Him before, at this point He was anointed with the Spirit, particularly in relation to the effects required for the execution of His office, with a greater and more prominent measure than before. This is why the evangelist Luke remarks (Luke 4:1) that "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan." Similarly, Peter provides a similar interpretation in Acts 10:37, where he speaks of John's baptism and how "after being baptized, Jesus went about doing good, for God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit" at that baptism. It is clear that the primary significance of the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus as a dove was to highlight His meekness and compassionate heart towards sinners, which were instilled in Him by the Holy Spirit. Christ Himself emphasizes this intention in two passages.

The first instance that supports the notion of His receiving the Spirit is found in the first sermon He preached after having received the Holy Spirit. Firstly, it is noted that He returned from His baptism "full of the Spirit" and was led into temptation. Then, in Luke 4:14, it is mentioned that He returned from the temptation "in the power of

that Spirit." After this, He explains the mystery of His receiving the Spirit in the likeness of a dove. This forms the basis of the first text He opened in His sermon, which He deliberately chose from Isaiah and read to the people. The text reads, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." This refers to those who are afflicted in spirit, burdened by conscience for their sins. The text continues, "he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." When He had read this portion that expressed the compassionate disposition of His Spirit towards sinners, depicting their various outward afflictions, He did not read any further. This implied that these were the main effects of His receiving the Spirit. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." In other words, He was given the Spirit for this purpose, to fulfill this work, and it was through that Spirit that He was anointed and equipped with the necessary gifts and dispositions for this task.

Another passage that highlights the fruit and purpose of His receiving the Spirit at His baptism is found in Matthew 12:18-19, taken from another passage in Isaiah. It reads, "Behold my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased; I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall show judgments to the Gentiles." Although the word "judgments" may sound severe, it should not be feared, for it refers to the doctrine of free grace and the gospel that brings about change and transformation in people. Likewise, in Matthew 12:20, "judgment" refers to the work of God's grace on people's hearts, as it states, "He will send forth judgment unto victory," signifying that the work of grace complements the doctrine of grace. In preaching this doctrine, which is good news, the prophet illustrates how He would

conduct Himself with a spirit that aligns with it, filled with meekness, stillness, calmness, and modesty. This is expressed through proverbial phrases commonly used at that time to convey such qualities, such as "He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets." It means that He would approach everything with gentleness and meekness, without violence or uproar. John the Baptist had the voice of a herald and a severe spirit, but Christ came with a gentle and melodious demeanor. Throughout His ministry, He displayed great tenderness, carefully attending to broken souls and considering their discouragements. It is said that He would not "break a bruised reed," meaning that He would tread lightly so as not to further damage a reed that was already broken. He would not extinguish "the smoking flax," which can be easily done, nor blow out a candlewick that emits a flickering smoke with even the slightest breeze. All these expressions serve to convey the tenderness of His heart. This tenderness was evident upon His receiving the Spirit, particularly after His baptism, for it was then that the words, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," were spoken. These words, combined with God giving Him the Spirit, are also mentioned in Isaiah 40, from which these words are derived. Therefore, He was filled with the Spirit to foster such sweet affections towards sinners.

(2.) Now, regarding the second aspect that contributes to this demonstration: it is certain that the same Spirit that was upon Christ and animated His spirit on earth still remains with Him in heaven. It must never be said that the Spirit of the Lord has departed from Him, for He is the one who sends and bestows the Holy Spirit upon us. And if the Spirit, once coming upon His followers, "abides with them forever," as Christ promises in John 14:16, then it is even more true that this Spirit abides with Christ, the Head, from whom we all,

since Christ ascended to heaven, receive that Spirit. It is by virtue of this Spirit dwelling in Him that He continues to dwell in us. Therefore, it is said of Him in Isaiah 11:2, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him." Moreover, in the account of the Holy Spirit descending upon Him at His baptism, it is not only recorded that "He descended upon Him," but it is also added, "and abode upon Him." In fact, to emphasize this further, it is repeated twice. As stated in John 1:32, the evangelist says, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove," and he adds another observation, "and it abode upon Him." And again, in John 1:33, he says, "I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'" Furthermore, it is implied there that the Spirit "rested on Him" for the purpose of baptizing us with the Holy Spirit until the end of the world. "He is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit," as stated. He initially descended as a dove and then forever remains upon Him as a dove. This dove itself came from heaven first. Therefore, it is certain that now that Christ Himself has ascended to heaven, the Spirit still remains and abides upon Him, even more so as a dove.

Moreover, let me add this: although the Spirit rested upon Him here on earth in immeasurable comparison to us, it can be confidently said that the Spirit, in terms of His effects in gifts of grace and glory, rests more abundantly upon Him in heaven than He did on earth. This is true in the same sense that at His baptism, as mentioned before, the Spirit rested upon Him more abundantly in those respects than before His baptism, during His private life. Just as He was installed as King and Priest anew when He entered heaven, preparing for a new phase of His work, He was also anointed anew with the "oil of gladness above His fellows" (Psalm 45:7). This

passage specifically refers to Him in His heavenly state, at God's right hand, in the fullness of joy. As stated in Psalm 16:11, it is also spoken of Him when He "goes forth in His majesty to conquer" (Psalm 45:4). Even in His exalted glory, meekness is not far off, but remains one of His attributes. As it follows in the previously cited verse, "In your majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness." Therefore, Peter says in Acts 2:36 that "God has made this Jesus, whom you (Jews) crucified, both Lord and Christ." "Lord" signifies His exaltation as King in heaven, while "Christ" signifies His anointing. And this anointing is none other than the Holy Spirit, with whom, as Peter tells us, He was anointed at His baptism (Acts 10:38). Furthermore, because He received the Spirit in the fullest measure that He was to receive Him forever at that moment, He poured Him out on His apostles and "baptized them with Him" (Acts 2).

Now, it is an established principle that whatever we receive from Christ, He Himself first receives in Himself on our behalf. Therefore, one reason why this anointing oil flowed so abundantly on the followers of our High Priest, that is, on His apostles and saints, and continues to do so to this day, is because our High Priest and Head Himself was freshly anointed with it. In Acts 2:33, Peter explains how they were filled with the Holy Spirit, saying that Christ "having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, poured out this which you now see and hear." This receiving should not be understood solely as His receiving the promise of the Holy Spirit for us, by being given the power to pour Him out upon them as God had promised, although this interpretation is valid. Rather, it also means that He had first received the Holy Spirit poured out upon Himself and then poured Him out upon them. This follows the principle that whatever God does for us through Christ, He first does it to Christ

Himself. All promises are made and fulfilled to Him first, and then to us in Him. All that He bestows upon us, He receives in Himself. This may be one reason why, as mentioned in John 7:39, "the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." But now that He is in heaven, it is said that He "has the seven spirits" (Revelation 1:4), which refers to the Holy Spirit. This is evident from Revelation 1:4, where grace and peace are wished "from the seven spirits," indicating the various effects of the Holy Spirit in both Christ and us, though He is one in person. The number seven represents perfection and is mentioned to signify that Christ now possesses the Spirit to the fullest extent that human nature can receive. Just as His knowledge (which is a fruit of the Spirit) has expanded since His ascension—for before He did not know when the day of judgment would be, but when He wrote the book of Revelation, He did—so have His compassionate affections (speaking of His human nature) expanded. All the mercies that God intends to bestow now flow through His hands and receive His special attention. He bestows these not only on the Jews but also on the Gentiles who were to be converted after His ascension. Thus, He now has a heart that corresponds to God's own heart, with the utmost capacity to show mercy to anyone whom God has intended it for.

And this is the third demonstration, from the Spirit's dwelling in Him. In order to strengthen your faith, you can confirm this by the experience of the Holy Spirit dwelling in your own hearts. There, He not only works meekness towards others but also stirs up pity within you for yourselves, urging you to seek salvation for your souls. For this purpose, He prompts you to offer incessant and "unutterable groans" before the throne of grace, seeking grace and mercy. Now, the same Spirit who dwells in Christ's heart in heaven is the same Spirit who dwells in your hearts here on earth. He always works in

Christ's heart first for your sake and then in yours through His commission. Therefore, rest assured that this Spirit stirs up in Him bowels of mercy that are infinitely greater towards you than what you can have for yourselves.

A Second Sort of Demonstration of Christ's Heart Toward Sinners

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.—Hebrews 4:15.

A second type of evidence can be drawn from the various ongoing commitments that lie upon Christ in heaven.

II. There is another type of evidence that arises from the numerous continuing engagements that rest upon Christ now that He is in heaven. These engagements must necessarily incline His heart towards us as much, if not more, than ever before. Such engagements include:

1. The enduring nature of all the close and intimate relationships and connections between Christ and us, which no amount of glory can alter. His heart and love cannot change, nor can He neglect any acts of love that these relationships require from Him. Natural relationships, such as those between a father and child, husband and wife, or siblings, remain in force in the world

for which they were created and cannot be dissolved. It is true that these fleshly relationships cease to exist in the afterlife because they were meant only for this world, as stated in Romans 7:2: "A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives." However, the relationships between Christ and us were established with regard to "the world to come," as mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and therefore, they retain their full vitality and are fulfilled in that world. This is why Christ is described as "the same yesterday, today, and forever" in Hebrews 13:8. To illustrate this, consider the unbreakable and lasting bond of worldly relationships, which remain unaffected by changes in one's status or position. For instance, in the case of Joseph, even after his elevation to a position of power, his relationships and affections remained unchanged towards his brothers, despite the wrongs they had done to him, and towards his father. In Genesis 45, he mentions both his elevated status: "God has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of Egypt" (Genesis 45:8), and his continued relation as a brother: "I am Joseph, your brother" (Genesis 45:4). He was the same person, and his affections towards them were evident as he wept over them and could not contain himself (Genesis 45:1-2). Similar sentiments were expressed towards his father, as he instructed his brothers to tell their father, "Thus says your son Joseph: God has made me lord of all Egypt" (Genesis 45:9), emphasizing that he was still their son Joseph.

Consider another example, where the mere relation of belonging to the same country and alliance is at play. In the case of Esther, when she was elevated to the position of queen over 127 provinces, even while in the arms of the mightiest monarch on earth and enjoying his

highest favour, she cried out, "How can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people, or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred!" (Esther 8:6). She simply considered her relation and felt its effect through a blood connection. Now, this holds even more true for husbands and wives, as they are in an even closer relationship. If the wife were poor and afflicted with illness, while the husband was as great and glorious as Solomon in all his splendour, society would condemn such a man if he failed to acknowledge and show love and respect to his wife. Yet, beyond all these relations, the relationship between a head and its members, being the most natural, carries the greatest obligation. As the apostle says, "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but loveth and cherishes it" (Ephesians 5:29). It is a natural law that "if one member be honoured, all the members are to rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26), and "if one member suffer, all the rest are to suffer with it." This is also true of Christ, as stated in 1 Corinthians 12:12. These relationships are what move Christ to continue loving us. Jesus, knowing that He was to depart from this world, loved His own who were in the world, and He loved them to the end (John 13:1). The reason for this is rooted in His relationship to them: they were "His own," encompassing all possible relationships—His own siblings, His own spouse, His own flesh. As He himself says, "The very world will love its own," so He will undoubtedly love His own even more. The apostle asserts, "He that provides not for his own family is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8). Although Christ is in heaven, His people are still His family—they are His followers, even while on earth. This is as true for them as it is for those who stand in His presence now that He is in His glory. The statement in Ephesians 3:15 clearly declares, "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." They collectively constitute one family to Him as their

Lord. Christ is the founder, the subject, and the most perfect exemplar and pattern of the relationships found on earth.

(1.) Firstly, he is the originator of all relationships and the affections that accompany them, both in nature and in grace. Just as the Psalmist argues, "Shall he not see who made the eye?"—I argue the same. If God has instilled these affections in parents and siblings that are suitable to their relationships, then surely he possesses them in even greater measure within himself. Even if our heavenly father Abraham may be unaware of us and Israel does not acknowledge us, yet, O Lord, you are our Father and our Redeemer (Isaiah 63:16). The prophet speaks of Christ, as evident in Isaiah 63:1-2, in a prophecy about the Jews' call. And he speaks of Christ, envisioning him in heaven, as he adds, "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of your holiness and your glory" (Isaiah 63:15). There are only two things that could cause him to neglect sinners: his holiness, considering them as sinners, and his glory, considering them as lowly creatures. Yet, he mentions both to demonstrate that despite being sinners, he does not reject them, and despite being lowly and insignificant, he does not despise them.

(2.) He encompasses all relationships within himself, a feat no other creature can achieve. Even if a man may be a husband, he is not simultaneously a father or a brother, but Christ encompasses all. No single relationship suffices to express his love towards us. Therefore, he refers to his church as both sister and spouse (Song of Songs 5:1).

(3.) He is the model and exemplar of all our relationships, and they are all mere reflections of his. In Ephesians 5, Christ is presented as the exemplar of the relationship and love between husbands. The apostle instructs, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved his

church" (Ephesians 5:25). Indeed, in Ephesians 5:31-33, the marriage of Adam and the words he spoke about cleaving to his wife serve as mere types and shadows of Christ's union with his church. The apostle clarifies, "This is a profound mystery—I am talking about Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:32). Firstly, it is a mystery, meaning that Adam's marriage was secretly ordained to represent and signify Christ's marriage to his church. Secondly, it is a great mystery because the reality being signified is so grand that the earthly representation is merely a shadow of it. Therefore, all these relationships, their corresponding affections, and the effects of those affections that we observe and read about in human beings are all ordained to be, just like everything else in this world, mere shadows of what exists in Christ, who alone is the truth and substance underlying all natural similarities, as well as ceremonial types.

If, therefore, no advancement can or should alter such relationships in human beings, then it should not alter them in Christ. "He is not ashamed to call us brethren," as stated in Hebrews 2:11. And yet, just before that, the apostle mentioned Jesus being "crowned with glory and honour" (Hebrews 2:10). Indeed, just as when one member suffers, the rest are affected with sympathy, the same holds true for Christ. Paul persecuted the saints, the members, and the Head in heaven cries out, "Why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4). Though the foot was trodden upon, the Head felt it, even while being "crowned with glory and honour." We are "flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone" (Ephesians 5:30), and therefore, as Esther said, Christ also says, "How can I endure to see the evil that befalls my people?" If a husband has a wife who is of humble means and he becomes a king, it would be his glory, not his shame, to elevate her. It would be shameful for him to neglect her, especially if, at the time of their betrothal, she was rich, glorious, and a king's daughter, but has since

fallen into poverty and misery. Now, although Christ's spouse has fallen into sin and misery, when she was initially given to Christ by God the Father, who orchestrated the match from eternity, she was regarded as glorious. In the act of election, both Christ and we were considered by God in that future glory to which he intends to bring us, with the intention preceding the execution.

For God, at the beginning, looks at the end of his works and what he intends to make of them. Thus, in his original plan to make us glorious as we shall be, he presented us to his Son, as reflected in his decrees, adorned with the radiance of glory that he planned to bestow upon us. He showed us to him as adorned with all the jewels of grace and glory that we will wear in heaven. He did this just as he brought Eve to Adam, whose marriage was a type and shadow of this union. Therefore, this was the first idea in which God embraced us, and we appeared before him, and it was in this state that he presented us to Christ, as if saying, "I will give you such a wife." The second person of the Trinity married us and undertook to bring us to that glorious state. And God ordained that we would fall into sin and misery only to illustrate the story of Christ's love, thus rendering our lover and husband more glorious in his love towards us, and making the original condition to which God intended to restore us more brilliantly illustrious. Thus, even though we were married to him when we were glorious in God's initial intention, although in his decrees regarding the execution of our journey to this glory, we may fall into lowliness and misery before attaining it, the marriage still stands.

Christ chose to share in our fate and experience it alongside us, just as we are called to do the same with him. That is why, when we fell into sin and our flesh became weak and susceptible to infirmities, he

"partook of the same" (Hebrews 2:14). Similarly, now that he has been exalted to the ordained glory, he cannot rest until he has restored us to the beauty with which we were initially presented to him. He desires to purify and cleanse us so that he may present us to himself as a glorious church (Ephesians 5:26-27). He envisions us returning to our native and original beauty, possessing the state in which he first took pleasure and married us. This is argued from the perspective of his role as our husband (Ephesians 5:25-26). Therefore, even though Christ is now in glory, do not be discouraged, for he has the heart of a husband towards you. He is betrothed to you forever in faithfulness and loving kindness (Hosea 2:19), and the image of that beauty, which was predetermined for you from eternity, is imprinted on his heart. He will not cease to sanctify and cleanse you until he has restored you to that beloved beauty that captivated him.

Another aspect of his commitment. This love towards us is further intensified by what he did and endured for us on earth before ascending to heaven. Having loved his own to the extent of laying down his life for them, he will undoubtedly love them to the end, even for eternity (John 13:1). In various kinds of relationships, both spiritual and natural, we observe that having done much for someone we love engenders greater care and affection towards them. The profound sufferings of Christ for us have certainly produced a similar effect in him. We can witness this in the love of parents. Besides the innate affection that mothers have for their children as their own, the pains, labour, and hardships they endure in giving birth increase their love for them, often surpassing that of fathers. The pinnacle of such affection is attributed to the mother's bond with her child, described as "the son of her womb" (Isaiah 49:15). Additionally, the act of personally nursing their children, despite the

trouble and challenges it entails, deepens their attachment and love for them. This is evident in the marked difference in affection and care they demonstrate towards the children they nurse compared to those they did not nurse among their own offspring. Thus, in Isaiah, the highest example of such love is mentioned in relation to a mother's affection for her "sucking child." Similar dynamics apply to conjugal love, wherein mutual affection is heightened through the trials and hardships encountered together. The more a couple suffers for one another, the stronger their desires and love become, and the beloved party for whom they endured hardship becomes even dearer to them.

And this holds true not only in natural relationships but also in spiritual ones. We can observe it in holy men like Moses, who served as a mediator for the Jews, prefiguring Christ's role as our mediator. Moses, under God's guidance, risked his own life to deliver the Israelites from Egypt, led them in the wilderness, gave them the good law that brought them wisdom, and through his prayers averted God's wrath from them. Despite the constant murmuring and even attempts to stone him by the very people he had done so much for, his heart remained deeply committed to their well-being. When God, in His wrath against the Israelites, offered to make Moses into a greater and mightier nation than them, Moses refused the offer, even though it was the greatest temptation any human being had ever faced. He continued to intercede for them, using the argument of what he had already done for them, such as the great might and power with which he had brought them out of Egypt, to implore God to extend His goodness towards them (Exodus 32:11). And God was moved by Moses' plea, as recorded in Exodus 32:14. Such was Moses' devotion to the people that he not only rejected God's offer, but he

offered himself as a sacrifice for their sake, saying, "Blot me out of the book of life" (Exodus 32:32).

Likewise, we can observe similar zealous love in the apostle Paul towards the converts he wrote to in his epistles. What endeared his affections to them was the effort, cost, toil, care, and suffering he had endured in bringing them to Christ. We see his deep concern for the Galatians, fearing that his labour on them might be in vain (Galatians 4:11). He expresses even greater depth of emotion when he says, "My little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you" (Galatians 4:19). He is willing to go through the pain of childbirth again for their sake rather than lose what he had laboured for previously.

Drawing from both these examples, where one was a type of Christ and the other a direct reflection of Christ's heart, we can be assured of the love and affection that must dwell within the heart of Christ, based on what He has done and suffered for us.

Firstly, let's consider Moses. Did Moses ever do for his people what Christ has done and suffered for you? Moses acknowledged that he had not carried his people in his womb, but Christ carried all of us, and we were the burden on his soul. He endured the agonies of death for us (as Peter described them in Acts 2:24). And what about Paul? Was Paul crucified for you? (Paul himself asked this question.) But Christ was crucified, and Paul mentions it to magnify Christ's love. Even if Paul had been crucified, would it have benefited us? No. So, if Paul was willing to go through labor pains for the Galatians, out of concern for their spiritual well-being, then how much more does Christ's heart move towards sinners! He has already endured immeasurable suffering for us, which he is reluctant to let go to

waste. In addition, he has such great love for us that if it were necessary for our salvation, he would be willing to go through the pain and suffering again. However, he only needed to do it once, as the author of Hebrews explains, because his priesthood was perfect. Therefore, rest assured that his love was not exhausted or diminished by his death; it was multiplied. It was his love that led him to die and lay down his life for his sheep (as he stated in John 10:15). He himself said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). And now, having died, it is inevitable that his soul would cling even more to his sheep.

A cause or a person that a man has suffered much for, according to the proportion of his sufferings, is one's love and zeal thereunto; for these do lay a strong engagement upon a man, because otherwise he loses the thanks and the honour of all that is already done and passed by him. "Have you suffered so many things in vain?" says the apostle to the Galatians 3:4, where he makes a motive and an incitement of it, that seeing they had endured so much for Christ, and the profession of him, they would not now lose all for want of doing a little more. And does not the same disposition remain in Christ? Especially seeing the hard work is over and dispatched which he was to do on earth; and that which now remains for him to do in heaven is far more sweet and full of glory, and as the "reaping in joy," of what he had here "sown in tears." If his love was so great, as to hold out the enduring so much; then now when that brunt is over, and his love is become a tried love, will it not continue? If when tried in adversity (and that is the surest and strongest love), and the greatest adversity that ever was; if it then held, will it not still do so in his prosperity much more? Did his heart stick to us and by us in the greatest temptation that ever was; and will his glorious and

prosperous estate take it off, or abate his love unto us? Certainly not! "Jesus the same today, yesterday, and forever," Hebrews 13:8. When he was in the midst of his pains, one for whom he was then a-suffering, said unto him, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom;" and could Christ mind him then? As you know he did, telling him, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Luke 23:42-43. Then surely when Christ came to paradise he would do it much more; and remember him too, by the surest token that ever was, and which he can never forget, namely, the pains which he was then enduring for him. He remembers both them and us still, as the prophet speaks of God. And if he would have us "remember his death till he comes," 1 Corinthians 11:24-26, so to cause our hearts to love him, then certainly himself does it in heaven much more. No question but he remembers us, as he promised to do that good thief, now he is in his kingdom. And so much for this second engagement.

A third commitment is the obligation of an office that still rests upon him, demanding from him mercy and compassion towards sinners who come to him. Therefore, as long as he remains in that position and holds that office, which is perpetual, his heart must inevitably be filled with tenderness and compassion. This office is the office of priesthood, which is mentioned in this text as the basis for our encouragement to approach the throne of grace with confidence, seeking grace and mercy, since we have a great high priest who has entered into heaven (Hebrews 4:15-16).

I will now demonstrate two things to support this argument.

Firstly, the high priesthood is an office established entirely for the purpose of displaying grace and mercy.

Secondly, this office places a responsibility on Christ to be full of grace and mercy in all his dealings, and therefore his heart is undoubtedly inclined and attuned to that.

Regarding the first point, the high priesthood is entirely an office of grace. I would even call it the office of forgiveness, established by God in heaven, and Christ has been appointed as its master and overseer. Just as his kingly office pertains to power and dominion, and his prophetic office pertains to knowledge and wisdom, his priestly office pertains to grace and mercy. The role of the high priest solely dealt with these matters. If there had not been a mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, there would have been no need for the high priest to enter it. His duty was to address mercy, reconciliation, and atonement for sinners, and thus officiate on their behalf at the mercy seat. Otherwise, he would have had no task or purpose when entering the most sacred place.

Now, this was merely a symbolic reference to the office of Christ in heaven. Therefore, in the text, the apostle mentions a throne of grace when he speaks of our high priest entering into heaven, as a response to the typology of the ancient high priest and the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. Furthermore, to reinforce this, the apostle proceeds to explain that very typology and apply it to Christ, for the purpose at hand. This occurs in the following verses after my text (Hebrews 5:1-3), where he provides a detailed description of a high priest, including all the necessary qualities and essential requirements, along with the eminent and primary purpose for which that office was ordained. Now, the significant and essential qualifications specified there, which a high priest must possess, are mercy and grace, and the purposes for which he is said to be ordained are acts of mercy and grace. In addition to the explicit meaning of these words,

consider that they are introduced to support and confirm the exhortation in the text, where Christ is portrayed as a "high priest who can sympathise with our weaknesses." Therefore, we should approach with confidence for grace and mercy... because "every high priest is selected from among the people and appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Hebrews 5:1; One who can have compassion.) Thus, these words affirm what was previously stated and highlight Christ as the substance, displaying his grace and merciful nature, in contrast to Aaron and his sons who were mere shadows. All of this is intended to comfort believers.

Now, regarding the purposes for which those high priests were appointed, they all speak of nothing but grace and mercy towards sinners. It is stated that they were ordained for men, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. There we find both the "finis cuius," the end for whom, and the "finis cui," the end for which, they were ordained.

(1.) For whom. They were ordained for men, that is, for the sake of men and their well-being. If it were not for the salvation of men, God would never have made Christ a priest. Therefore, he is entirely devoted to utilising all his influence and power for the sake of those for whom he was ordained as a priest, in all matters between God and them. He handles all things to be done by us towards God or for us with God, he takes up all our disputes with God, and mediates reconciliation between us and Him. He secures favour for us from God and accomplishes all that which God would have done for our salvation. And in order to do this willingly, kindly, and naturally for us, just as every high priest was "selected from among the people," so was Christ, that he might be a priest of our own kind and thus be even more compassionate towards us than an angelic nature could

have been. I will shortly explain how significant this is to his role as a merciful high priest.

(2.) The purpose for which every high priest was ordained is evident: to "offer gifts and sacrifices for sins." Sacrifices were offered to appease God's wrath against sin, while gifts were given to obtain His favour. As you know, in the preceding verses, the apostle mentioned grace and mercy, and encouraged us to approach this high priest boldly for both. And to further encourage us, he states that the high priest, by virtue of his office, was appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Gifts were offered to procure all grace, and sacrifices were offered to obtain all mercy for us in relation to our sins. Thus, you can see the purpose for which he is ordained, encompassing all matters of grace and mercy, serving as an encouragement for us to seek both (Hebrews 5:1).

(3.) The required qualification for a high priest was to be "one that could have compassion," as stated in Hebrews 5:2. A person chosen as high priest was not selected for their great wisdom, power, or exact holiness, but for the mercy and compassion within them. This attribute is emphasised as the specific and essential quality of a high priest. It is the internal disposition and heart that internally constitutes and prepares them for that office, as expressed in Hebrews 5:4. The word *δυνάμενος*, meaning "that can" or "is able," implies an inner faculty, spirit, disposition, and a heart that knows how to show compassion. It is the same word the apostle used earlier to describe Christ's heart in the text, *δυνάμενον συμπαθεῖν*, which means "who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." The apostle had also used it in relation to Christ's mercy in Hebrews 2:18, *δύναται*, which does not refer to external power (what we commonly

refer to as ability), but rather an internal inclination of His will. He has a heart capable of forgiveness and providing help.

Therefore, if this quality is essential for a high priest, it is most prominent in Christ. Just as Christ would not have been fit to be God's king without having all power and strength, which are essential for His role as king, He would not have been God's high priest if He did not possess such a compassionate heart. Moreover, He would no longer be a priest if He ceased to have such a heart. Just as the gifts of a minister internally qualify them for their ministry, and losing these gifts disqualifies them from the office, or how reason distinguishes a person as human and losing it reduces them to the level of a beast, similarly, Christ would only continue to be a priest as long as He possesses a heart that "can have compassion," as described in the second verse. The word translated as "to have compassion" carries great emphasis, and its force is noteworthy. In the original Greek, it is *μετριοπαθεῖν*, signifying "to have compassion according to each person's measure and proportion." In the text, Christ is described as being "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" or as "suffering with us in all our evils." This word also implies a willingness to suffer.

However, distressed souls may raise the following question: Although he pities me and is affected, will he fully comprehend and empathise with my immense misery and sins in order to show pity in accordance with their magnitude? To address this thought and counter the objection concerning Christ's compassion, the apostle describes him in relation to the duty of the high priest, who serves as his shadow. Christ is one who "can have compassion according to the measure of everyone's distress." He carefully considers each circumstance and responds with appropriate pity and assistance. If

the distress is great, he feels a profound sympathy because he is a great high priest. Your misery can never surpass his mercy. The word used here is derived from "measure" and "to suffer." It is evident that the apostle's intention is to convey this meaning through the word, as can be seen in what follows. He specifically mentions various degrees, proportions, and categories of sinners under the old law who were eligible for mercy and compassion. He states that Christ can have compassion on the ignorant and those who have gone astray. In the old law, there are references to different levels and types of sinners for whom God prescribed different and proportionate sacrifices (Leviticus 4:2, 5). There were sacrifices designated for sins committed out of ignorance, as well as for sins committed knowingly (Leviticus 6:2-3, compared with Leviticus 6:6).

When a sinner approached the high priest to seek atonement, the priest would wisely consider the nature and magnitude of the sin, whether it was an act of pure ignorance or a deliberate transgression. Accordingly, he would determine the appropriate sacrifice and intercede on behalf of the individual. Thus, he would "pity him according to measure" or with reason and discretion, as indicated in the margin. That is why the apostle mentions both the ignorant sinners, those who sin out of pure ignorance, and those who have gone astray, committing willful and intentional iniquity. Through this characteristic of the high priest, the apostle portrays Christ. His response towards individuals corresponds to the extent of their need and distress caused by sin and misery. As we have sins of varying degrees, he has corresponding measures of mercy and provides proportional mediation, whether they are acts of ignorance, recurring daily sins, or more severe and presumptuous transgressions. Therefore, let neither category of sin discourage anyone from approaching Christ for grace and mercy.

To conclude, Christ possesses the qualification of merciful compassionateness for this office, and the purpose of this office is to extend mercy to sinners of all kinds, according to the measure and magnitude of their sins and miseries. From these points, the following corollaries arise, completing the demonstration at hand: 1. He is no longer suitable for this role unless he continues to possess a gracious disposition and the ability to have compassion. 2. He cannot faithfully fulfill the responsibilities of this office, as intended, unless he demonstrates grace and mercy to those who come to his throne of grace seeking it.

And that is the second point that I initially stated: this office imposes a duty on him to have compassion, and it necessarily follows from the previous point. To further confirm this, we have both of these aspects presented together in another parallel passage, which is Hebrews 2:17: "That he might be a merciful and faithful high priest." Here, he is described as both merciful and faithful, and both attributes are ascribed to him in relation to his high priest's office as a "faithful high priest." This pertains to his role in heaven, after the days of his earthly existence. The apostle explains the reason behind it, stating that he himself has suffered (Hebrews 2:18), which refers to the time after his sufferings ended. When he is referred to as merciful, it relates to the internal disposition of his heart mentioned earlier, which qualifies him for this office. On the other hand, when he is described as faithful, it refers to his execution of the duties incumbent upon him. He is faithful in fulfilling the duty assigned to him by his appointment to that office.

Therefore, this goes beyond the previous point by demonstrating that exercising mercy is the obligation of his position, and if he is to be faithful, he must be merciful. Faithfulness in any office implies the

precise fulfillment of responsibilities prescribed by the one who appoints to that office, viewing them as obligations. This accurately describes faithfulness, and it applies to Christ. This is implied in the following passage, which immediately follows at the beginning of Hebrews 3:2: "Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as Moses also was faithful in all his house." The same sentiment is expressed explicitly in the previously quoted passage from Hebrews 5, in the subsequent words to those we have just discussed (Hebrews 5:3): "And by reason hereof he ought to offer for sins." The apostle speaks of Christ's type, the high priest, to illustrate that it is also Christ's duty to mediate for all who come to him. He "ought to do it." Therefore, considering that this office binds him to it by God's appointment and that it is the duty of his position, he will undoubtedly perform it most diligently, for neglecting to do so would mean failing in his duty. Our comfort lies in knowing that his faithfulness lies in being merciful. As you can see, both attributes are united here. Everyone is to fulfill the proper duty of their position and attend to it meticulously. In Romans 12, the apostle exhorts the discharge of the duties of each office in the church. He says, "Let him who has a ministry" entrusted to him "wait on his ministry" (Romans 12:7). And if someone's role involves showing mercy, as mentioned in Romans 12:8 (which was an office in the church responsible for caring for the poor and sick), they should do so cheerfully. Christ also affirms this about himself in Isaiah 61:1-2: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, to bind up the brokenhearted, to open the prison doors to those who are bound," to visit and relieve them, and "to preach good tidings to the meek." He has charge of souls in need of such care. He is the great shepherd and bishop of souls (1 Peter 2:25), and the sick and broken are his sheep, his responsibility, his diocese, as described in Ezekiel 34:16. He forever views tending to them as his duty, as

indicated by his words on a similar occasion in John 10:16: "Other sheep I have" (says Christ), "them I must bring." Notice how he emphasizes the "I must," seeing it as his duty strictly imposed on him by his role as a shepherd. Given that showing mercy is the proper duty of his position, he performs it with cheerfulness, as the apostle states. Mercy brings about a cheerful disposition in one's actions. Christ, as the bishop, also serves as the deacon (for he fulfills all offices within his church), not only for the circumcised but also for the uncircumcised, as stated in Romans 15:8. These offices of high priest, shepherd, and bishop he continues to hold in heaven, for "he remains a priest forever" (Hebrews 7:24).

Now, therefore, to conclude this point: Never fear that Christ's exalted position in heaven would in any way change his disposition, for his very exaltation further binds him to it. Although he has "entered into the heavens," consider that it is specifically mentioned that he remains there as a high priest. Therefore, do not fear, for his very position necessitates mercy from him towards those who approach him. Even though he has been "exalted far above all principalities and powers" in heaven, his high priesthood still accompanies him. For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest who is higher than the heavens themselves (Hebrews 7:26). Furthermore, although he sits at the right hand of God and on his Father's throne, that throne is a "throne of grace," as the text states. Just as the mercy-seat in the tabernacle was the farthest and highest object in the Holy of Holies, the throne of grace (which is an infinite encouragement for us) is the highest seat in heaven. Therefore, if Christ desires to have and maintain the greatest position in heaven, the highest honour that heaven itself can bestow upon him, it obligates him to show grace and mercy. The highest honour in heaven is accompanied by the attribute of grace in its very title, "A

throne of grace." As Solomon says, "A king's throne is established by righteousness" (Proverbs 25:5), it remains firm through righteousness. Similarly, Christ's throne is established by grace. Grace was both the initial foundation of his throne, or the means by which he was raised to it, and it is also the sustainer of it.

Firstly, grace is the foundation of his throne. The reason why God placed him in that position is because he had more grace and mercy in his heart than all creatures combined or could ever possess. Typically, favourites are raised up for something outstanding in them, whether it be beauty, wit, political astuteness, or the like. If you ask what prompted God to elevate Christ to this lofty throne, it was his grace. As stated in Psalm 45:2, "Grace is poured upon thy lips," and it dwells even more abundantly in his heart. As a result, "God hath blessed thee," as the verse continues, bestowing upon him all the glories of heaven, which are God's blessings to his Son.

Secondly, grace upholds his throne. As Psalm 45:4 declares, "In thy majesty...prosper thou," not only because of meekness and righteousness but also because of truth. This truth refers to the word of truth, "the gospel of our salvation," as Paul explains in Ephesians 1:13. These are the pillars and supports of his throne and majesty. And you can see that two of them pertain to grace (meekness and the gospel of our salvation), while one pertains to justice or righteousness, yet even that one is for our benefit. It is through these elements that Christ's throne is established. As Psalm 45:6 continues, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever," and you know that this is applied to Christ in Hebrews 1:8. Therefore, do not fear when his majesty is upheld by meekness and his throne by grace, and when he maintains his position by demonstrating these qualities.

This concludes what can be said about the duties placed upon Christ as a priest.

A fourth aspect that can greatly strengthen our faith in this matter is Christ's personal interest, both in the fact that our salvation is the result of his sacrificial death and also that his own joy, comfort, happiness, and glory are increased by showing grace and mercy to his followers on earth, providing forgiveness, relief, and comfort in their weaknesses. Therefore, in addition to the obligation of the office he has undertaken for us, there is the significant factor of his own vested interest that aligns with it, motivating him to be faithful to us in all matters concerning our well-being. We can observe that advocates and attorneys, even though they have no personal stake or ownership in the cases they represent, are diligent in promoting and advocating for their clients simply because it is their professional duty and responsibility, despite often receiving only a small fee in comparison to the value of the disputed property. How much more diligent would they be if the lands and estates they fought for were their own or acquired for the sake of their wives' settlements or children's inheritances!

Similarly, the forgiveness of our sins, the salvation of our souls, and our conformity to Christ are the very outcome of Christ's bloodshed, and in working towards these ends, he benefits his own children and spouse, which is essentially benefiting himself. In fact, his engagement in these matters brings him even greater comfort and glory than it bestows upon us. Hence, in the beginning of the subsequent chapter (Hebrews 3), the apostle states that Christ is faithful in executing his office not merely as a servant entrusted by his master, but as an owner who possesses a vested interest in the things entrusted to his care and receives a reward from them. As

mentioned in Hebrews 3:5, "Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward. But Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are." If a physician can be faithful in attending to a patient's needs for a fee, how much more faithful will they be if they are the parent of the patient and their own life and happiness are intertwined with that of their child, or if a significant portion of their income relies on the health and well-being of the individual to whom they administer medical treatment? In such cases, the patient can be assured of receiving the utmost care and attention, not lacking any remedies or treatments that would bring comfort, not lacking any means of healing and maintaining health, and not lacking any suitable diet to nourish and strengthen them. This is akin to the responsibility of the chief official in Daniel 1, who was entrusted with the care of the children and ensured that they had the finest food and drink, as his position depended on their well-being and appearance. Thus, God has ordained that Christ's provision of grace, mercy, and comfort to us is a significant part of his glory and contributes to the abundance of his happiness and inheritance in heaven, establishing an everlasting bond between his heart and ours.

To explain how this can be, let us consider that the human nature of Christ in heaven experiences a twofold capacity for glory, happiness, and delight. The first is derived from the sheer fellowship and communion he enjoys with his Father and the other persons of the Godhead through his personal union with divinity. Christ himself speaks of this joy in Psalm 16:11, expressing that he finds fullness of joy in the presence of God and eternal pleasures at His right hand. This joy is constant, unchanging, absolute, and self-sufficient for the Son of God, the heir of all things, even if he had no other source of joy from any creature. It is his inherent inheritance.

However, God has also bestowed upon him another capacity for glory and a source of pleasure that comes in a different way—specifically, through his church and spouse, which is his body. In Ephesians 1, after the apostle has described Christ's exalted position in heaven, seated at the right hand of God, far above all principalities and powers, he adds in Ephesians 1:22, "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Thus, although Christ is personally full in himself, being filled with the fullness of the Godhead, to the point of overflowing and filling all things, he considers—both in reality and in his gracious disposition—his church and its salvation to be an additional fullness. As the Son of God, he is complete and self-sufficient, but as the head of the church, he experiences another fullness of joy derived from the well-being and happiness of his members. Just as pleasure accompanies and results from action, this joy arises from his acts of grace and continual benevolence towards his members. As the apostle expresses it, it is through his filling them with mercy, grace, comfort, and happiness that he himself becomes even more full. This, too, is his inheritance, alongside the previous one.

Therefore, Christ has a twofold inheritance upon which he draws for his sustenance. The first is personal, inherent to him as the Son of God, even from the moment of his incarnation before he had performed any work towards our salvation. The second is acquired, earned, and deserved through his great service and obedience, particularly in his role as the mediator and head of the church. While he is completely self-sufficient, never lacking in himself, he does not disregard the portion of his reward that comes from below. In addition to the glory of his person, there is glory in his role as the mediator and head of his church. Thus, even though he is fully

satisfied in himself, he values and appreciates this aspect of his reward that originates from the earthly realm. This concludes the explanation.

Now, secondly, for the confirmation and completion of the demonstration at hand. This additional glory and happiness of Christ is further enlarged and increased as his members experience the effects of his redemptive work more and more. When their sins are forgiven, their hearts are sanctified, and their spirits are comforted, he sees the fruit of his labor and finds comfort in it. He is glorified by it, and indeed, he takes even greater pleasure and joy in it than they themselves can. This undoubtedly sustains his care and love for his children here on earth, continually watering and refreshing them (Isaiah 27:3). By extending acts of grace, favor, and goodness towards them, he is essentially doing good to himself, which is the strongest commitment imaginable. This is why the apostle urges husbands to love their wives, as in doing so, they love themselves: "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself" (Ephesians 5:28). Such is the profound and intimate nature of that relationship. Likewise, the same principle applies to Christ's love for his church. In that same passage, the love of Christ for his church is presented as the pattern and example for our own love: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church" (Ephesians 5:25). By comparing these statements, one can argue that when Christ loves his church, he is essentially loving himself. Therefore, the more love and grace he demonstrates towards the members of his body, the more love he shows himself. This is further emphasized in Ephesians 5:27, where it is stated that he daily "washes and cleanses his church," freeing it from the guilt and power of sin, "that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle." Note that it is for

himself. Everything he does for his members is ultimately for himself, even more so than for them. His share of glory derived from theirs is greater, as the glory of the cause surpasses that of the effect. Indeed, this is how Scripture speaks of it, referring to the saints as the "glory of Christ" (2 Corinthians 8:23). In John 17:13, 22-23, Christ himself declares that he is "glorified in them." In Psalm 45, where Christ is depicted as Solomon in all his royal splendour and majesty, it is stated that he greatly desires and delights in the beauty of his queen, representing the graces of the saints. This is not an ordinary delight, but a greatly intensified desire that grows as her beauty increases. This serves as a motivation for her to become more holy and conformed to him, as stated in Psalm 45:10, "Listen, O daughter, consider and give ear: Forget your people and your father's house. The king is enthralled by your beauty." Christ finds pleasure in the beauty of his bride, just as we find pleasure in his beauty, although it is of a different nature. He persists until every blemish and imperfection is removed from the face of his bride, as the apostle mentioned earlier, presenting her as glorious to himself—delightful and pleasing in his eyes.

And in line with this, to further confirm our belief, Christ, in his farewell sermon before ascending to heaven, assures his disciples that his heart will not be detached from them. On the contrary, his joy will still reside in them, seeing them thrive and bear fruit (John 15:9-11). His aim is to assure them of his enduring love even in his absence. He tells them, "As my Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love" (John 15:9-10). In other words, he assures them that his love for them will persist, so they should remain steadfast in return. To provide them with further reassurance, he explains that even when he is in heaven, experiencing the utmost joy at the right hand of God, his joy will still be in them and in their

righteous actions. He says, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11). His words resemble those of a father bidding farewell to his children, comforting them and offering guidance for when he is no longer with them—urging them to keep his commandments and love one another (John 15:10, 12). He motivates them by saying, "so shall my joy remain in you." It is akin to how fathers speak, and it will be for their own benefit too; their joy will be complete.

To shed some light on these words, the term "remain," used in relation to their abiding in his love and his joy abiding in them, refers to the continuation of both these aspects towards them in heaven. When Christ says, "that my joy may remain in you," it implies that even in heaven, he will have reason to rejoice in them when he hears of their unity, love for one another, and obedience to his commandments. The joy referred to as "my joy" is not to be understood objectively as their joy in him, but subjectively as the joy that he himself will have in them. Augustine long ago interpreted it as such, saying, "What is Christ's joy in us, but that which he vouchsafes to have of and for us?" This interpretation is supported by the fact that if it were their joy that he meant in the initial statement, then the subsequent statement, "and your joy will be full," would be redundant. Therefore, he speaks of his joy and their joy as two distinct things, both serving as powerful motivators to encourage and inspire his disciples to obey. To gain an understanding of Christ's heart in this matter, we can look to the examples of the apostles Paul and John, who themselves experienced a smaller reflection of Christ's joy. What brought them the greatest joy in this world, aside from direct communion with Christ, was seeing the fruit of their ministry manifested in the lives and hearts of those they had brought to Christ.

Look at how Paul expresses himself in 1 Thessalonians 2:19, saying, "What is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? You are our glory and joy." John says something similar in 3 John 1:3, as he greatly rejoices upon hearing the good testimony about Gaius. He declares, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." Now, what were Paul and John but instruments through whom others believed and were brought forth? They were not the ones crucified for them, nor were these individuals their own offspring. Therefore, if Paul and John find immense joy and satisfaction in the well-being and faithfulness of those they have ministered to, how much more so must it be for Christ, whose connection and care for us is infinitely greater? His members are his joy and crown. Seeing them come to him for grace and mercy, and witnessing their commitment to truth, brings him even greater delight, for he sees the fruits of his sacrificial work and is content. Surely, what Solomon says about parents being gladdened by wise children applies even more to Christ. Holiness, fruitfulness, and spiritual comfort in our lives here on earth bring joy to the heart of our "everlasting Father." Christ himself has proclaimed it. I implore you to believe him and conduct yourselves accordingly. If part of his joy stems from our thriving and righteousness, then doubt not the persistence of his affections. Love for himself will ensure that his affections remain steadfast towards us, always ready to embrace and offer us grace and mercy when we seek it.

There is a fifth commitment that arises from Christ's assumption of our very nature, which he still bears in heaven. The purpose behind God's ordained union of our nature with the divinity in the second person was to make him a merciful high priest. Thus, his office imposes this duty upon him, and his incarnation qualifies him for the role and its fulfilment. This further supports the point at hand. We

find that this was not only an essential requirement for our high priest, enhancing his capacity for compassion, but also one of the significant purposes behind God's plan in the assumption of our nature.

Firstly, it is an essential requirement to make him more merciful. As stated in Hebrews 5:1, the passage previously mentioned but left to be discussed here, it says, "Every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins." This is done so that he "can deal gently with those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness." This qualification is meant to evoke a natural and genuine compassion, similar to how humans feel towards their own kind. Angels, though greater in stature, would not possess the same empathy towards humans as one of our own nature would.

And secondly, this was also God's purpose and intention in ordaining Christ's assumption of our nature, as indicated in the previously mentioned passage from Hebrews 2:16-17. It states, "For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest." This was done "in order to become," or "be made merciful."

But some may ask, wasn't the Son of God already merciful even without taking on our nature, just as he was afterwards when he assumed it? Does his mercy thereby become greater than it would have been if he had not taken on human nature?

I answer, Yes. He is equally merciful, but still:

[1.] This serves as a clear and profound demonstration (the greatest one that could have been given to humankind) of the everlasting continuation of God's mercies towards humanity. By becoming a man for eternity, God assures us that he will be merciful to humans, who share his nature, forever. Just as his union with our nature is everlasting, so too are his mercies, which will never cease to be bestowed upon us. His mercy towards us will remain as long as he remains a man, which will be for eternity. This was the purpose of his assumption of our nature.

[2.] However, that is not all. His taking on our nature not only adds to our faith but also, in some way or another, adds to his ability to be merciful. Hence, it is said, "so that he might be made merciful." That is, merciful in a way that God would not have been without assuming human nature, specifically as a man. This union of both natures, divine and human, was established by God to create the most remarkable blend of grace and mercy that could ever exist, perfectly suited to heal and save our souls. The vastness of God's mercy, which forms the stock and treasury of the mercies bestowed upon us, cannot be increased by the assumption of human nature. Rather, Christ's humanity receives its full measure of mercy from his divinity. Without the mercies of God enlarging his heart towards us, he could never have sustained being eternally merciful to us. However, his assumption of human nature introduces a new way of being merciful. It assimilates all these mercies and transforms them into the mercies of a man. It imparts a natural kindness that resonates with our capacity for understanding. Therefore, God now pities us, who are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, in the same kind and natural manner that one human pities another. This encourages us to approach him, to have a familiar relationship with God, and to seek his grace and mercy, just as humans would do with

one another. We know that in the man Christ Jesus (whom we believe in), God dwells, and his mercies work through his heart in a human manner.

I will no longer dwell on this idea now, as I will have the opportunity to address it again and elaborate further under the next third main point, which involves demonstrating how Christ's heart is inclined towards sinners. Let us simply take note of the comfort this can bring to our faith: Christ must cease to be a man if he were to cease being merciful. The very purpose of his incarnation was to show mercy to us in a way that resonates with our understanding, something which, as God alone, he was not capable of. Let me boldly add this true statement: he may as soon cease to be God as he may cease to be a man. Once he assumed human nature, it was elevated to all the inherent privileges of being the Son of God, one of which (and now inherent to him) is to remain eternally united. He may as soon cease to be either God or man as he may cease to be ready to show mercy. Therefore, not only does the scope of Christ's role, but also the purpose behind his assumption of our nature, place a stronger and more compelling obligation upon him than any before, or than all of them combined.

Christ's Heart is Touched with the Feeling, of our Infirmities

For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all things tempted like as we

are, yet without sin.—Hebrews 4:15

To clarify how this should be understood, namely that Christ's heart is moved by the experience of our weaknesses, and how our weaknesses find their way into his heart.

I. After providing extensive evidence and demonstrations of the compassion and similarity of Christ's heart towards us, both in his present state in heaven and during his time on earth, through external (in the first part) and internal (in the second part) factors, I now turn to the final point that I introduced at the beginning of these discussions. This pertains to the manner in which Christ is affected with pity towards us—how we are to comprehend it and how such emotions find their way into his heart, leading to these compassionate sentiments towards us. I indicated at the start of the second part that this needed to be addressed, as it is essential for understanding and clarifying the words of the text, which primarily convey this idea, and for elucidating the matter at hand. As I previously explained, these words anticipate and address an objection that may arise, suggesting that Christ's heavenly state may not be capable of such affections that would tenderly move him to pity and compassion, given his glorified state in both soul and body. Because this thought could naturally arise in the minds of many, the apostle preempts it by affirming the opposite: "We have not a high priest who is unable to sympathise," meaning that he is both able and capable of such empathy, and moreover, he is indeed moved by it despite his glory. The apostle supports this affirmation by explaining the reason behind it, namely, that "he was tempted in every way as we are," as stated in Hebrews 4:15.

Now, in the process of addressing and elucidating these matters, which present considerable challenges, I will cautiously proceed to uncover the nature of Christ's affection in this regard, taking careful steps to gradually unveil it.

1. This feeling of compassion, or his being "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," is not to be completely understood in a metaphorical or figurative sense, as the expressions used for God in the Old Testament are to be understood when bowels of compassion are attributed to Him, or when it is said that His bowels are "rolled together," or when it is stated that God repented and was afflicted in all His people's afflictions. These expressions were used for God (as we all know) merely in the manner of men, to convey and represent to our understanding the affections that parents or friends typically have in certain cases (which provoke them to specific actions), and to show that similar effects proceed from God towards us when He sees us in distress. So, these expressions are spoken more in terms of effect rather than actual emotions in God's heart, as He is not capable of such passions. Now, to properly understand this, the first thing I affirm is that what is being spoken of Christ here is not to be understood merely in that sense, and my reason for this is based on two considerations.

First, this affection towards us that is mentioned here is clearly referring to His human nature and not His divinity alone, as it is spoken of the nature in which He was once tempted as we are now. This is expressly stated in the following words, which can only refer to His human nature.

Secondly, those kinds of expressions that were used for God before the assumption of our nature, which were only metaphorical and figurative, "after the manner of men," should not be spoken of Christ and His assumed human nature in any further or more real and proper sense. When He is as truly and properly a man as we are, I cannot imagine why this should be the case, especially when considering the previous point that one of the purposes of Christ taking on human nature was "that he might be a merciful high priest forever" in a way that He, being solely God, could not have been. I confess that I have often wondered at the expression used there, "He took the seed of Abraham, that he might be made a merciful high priest" (Hebrews 2:16-17), which initially sounded as if God had become more merciful by taking on our nature. However, this wonder is resolved by understanding that this assumption added a new way for God to be merciful, through which it can now be said, for the comfort and assurance of our faith, that God is truly and genuinely merciful, just like a man. Considering this contributes to the clarification of the matter at hand. Whereas God, in His inherent blessedness and perfection, could not have been moved by the slightest feeling of our weaknesses, and He was not capable of the affection of pity or compassion Himself ("He is not like a man, that he should pity or repent" - 1 Samuel 15:29), He can indeed do for us in our distress what a compassionate person would do. However, He is not capable of experiencing those affections and emotions Himself. Therefore, among other reasons for assuming human nature, this purpose emerged before God: that God might become loving and merciful towards human beings, just as one person is to another. As a result, what was previously expressed in an improper and figurative manner in the Old Testament to convey it to our understanding can now be truly attributed to Him in reality. God can

forever be said to be compassionate as a man and to be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses as a man. Through this blessed union of both natures, the language of the Old Testament, previously expressed only in symbolic terms, becomes confirmed and fulfilled in its truth, just as all other shadows were fulfilled in Christ. This is the initial step towards understanding what is said of Christ here, based on this comparison with similar attributes ascribed to God Himself.

2. Another step to help us understand this is through a further comparison with angels and their affections of love and pity, which are certainly present in them. In comparison to them, the affections in Christ's glorified human nature must necessarily be even more similar to ours, even more tender and human. In Hebrews 2:16, it is explicitly stated, "For indeed he does not give aid to angels, but he does give aid to the seed of Abraham." Part of the purpose of these words is to show and provide the reason not only for why he took on our nature in frail flesh, as the apostle mentioned in Hebrews 2:14, but also why he took on a human nature in substance, and not the nature of angels. The reason is that in his affections of mercy, he wanted to be forever closer to us and have such affections of the same kind as ours. In other aspects, an angel would have been a higher and more glorious high priest than a man.

Now, while angels are fellow servants with us, as an angel referred to himself in Revelation 22:9, their affections towards us are more akin to ours than God's, and they are more capable of being moved by our miseries. Although they are spirits, they possess something analogous or resembling the affections of pity and grief that we have. In fact, to the extent that these affections reside in our souls and are not overwhelmed by bodily passions, to which our souls are

connected, they are the very same kind of affections that exist in angels. That's why the same desires that are in humans are said to be in devils (John 8:44), and the devils are also said to fear and tremble. Conversely, the same affections that are in humans, in their spiritual aspect where the spirit or soul is the seat of these affections, must necessarily be found in the good angels. However, since Christ has a human nature that is of the same substance as ours, consisting of both soul and body, although made spiritual through glory, yet not becoming a spirit ("A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have," said Christ of himself after his resurrection - Luke 24:39), he must inevitably have affections towards us that are even more similar to ours than those of the angels. Therefore, through these two steps, we establish two things: that even in Christ's glorified human nature, affections of pity and compassion are genuine and not metaphorical attributions to him as they are to God, and that these affections are closer and more akin to ours than those in angels. They are affections proper to human nature, truly human. And he would have had these affections even if this human nature had been as glorious from the very moment of its assumption as it is now in heaven.

3. Now, thirdly, consider this: God ordained that before Christ adorned his human nature with the glory he possesses in heaven and bestowed that glory upon it, he should take on that nature already burdened with all our infirmities, even the very same that afflict us, and live in this world just as we do for many years. Throughout that time, God arranged for him to endure all sorts of afflictions and miseries that we ourselves encounter. During that period, he experienced and became accustomed to the same sorrows that we do, and God allowed him to bear the vulnerability and sensitivity of spirit that enables him to empathise deeply with all our distresses (without sin) and to

exhibit the very same emotions under such distresses that we often feel in our own hearts. God orchestrated this on purpose, in order to prepare and shape his heart, when he would be in glory, to possess the kind of affections described in the text. This is suggested by both this text and the previously mentioned passage in Hebrews 2:14, which states, "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood," a phrase that always denotes the frailties of human nature, as in 1 Corinthians 15:50, "He himself shared in the same...that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest" (Hebrews 2:17). The apostle then provides the reason for this in Hebrews 2:18, "For in that he himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able"—this ability, as previously explained, means having a heart that is equipped and enabled, through personal experience, to show compassion—"to aid those who are tempted." What this means is that it is not merely the act of assuming a human nature, even if it were glorious from the beginning, that would fully equip him to be genuinely compassionate through personal experience. Although, as mentioned earlier, his knowledge of our miseries acquired through taking on our nature would indeed make him truly and genuinely compassionate towards us, with affections that are human and befitting a man, much closer and similar to ours than those of the angels themselves, or even those ascribed to God when he is said to pity us. However, what truly completes this preparation of his heart is his initial assumption of our nature, already clothed in frailties, and his living in this world just as we do. This experience forever enables him to intimately understand our hearts and innermost beings. It goes beyond mere knowledge of our distress and the ability to feel a human

affection towards someone of his own kind; it is a personal, experiential recollection of similar afflictions within himself.

And the text itself also suggests how our miseries penetrate his heart more deeply now that he is in heaven. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin" (Hebrews 4:15). To provide further comfort in this matter, note how comprehensively the apostle speaks of Christ's temptations during his time on earth. First, in terms of the variety of temptations, he says he was tempted "in all points," encompassing every kind of trial and challenge that we experience. Second, he emphasises the manner of his temptations by stating that they were "like as we are." His heart was affected, wounded, pierced, and distressed in the very same way as ours is in such trials, yet he remained without sin. God purposely allowed all his affections to remain tender and acutely sensitive to evil. Christ, therefore, took to heart everything that happened to him with utmost intensity; he did not disregard any cross, whether it came from God or from people, but fully experienced the weight of it. His heart was even more tender in all aspects of affection than any of ours, particularly in love and compassion. This is why he is described as "a man of sorrows" (Isaiah 53:3) more than any other person ever was or will be.

Now, to explain how our miseries reach his heart and elicit such genuine affections of pity and compassion in him, it is not difficult to comprehend based on what has been discussed thus far and what the text hints at.

(1.) His understanding and knowledge, as part of his human nature, are aware of all the experiences that befall his followers here on

earth. The text makes this clear, for the apostle states it to encourage us, affirming that "Christ is touched with the feeling of our infirmities." This would not provide relief if it did not imply that he has a specific and comprehensive knowledge of them. If he did not know all our experiences, we would lack solace since we would not know which ones he knows and which ones he does not. The apostle affirms this concerning his human nature, as mentioned before, as he speaks of the nature that was tempted during his earthly sojourn. Therefore, in Revelation 5:6, he is referred to as the "Lamb who had been slain" and as "the man Christ Jesus," having "seven eyes" alongside "seven horns." These seven eyes represent the "seven spirits sent out into all the earth." Through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, his eyes of providence are present throughout the world, observing all that occurs under the sun. Similarly, he is depicted with seven horns denoting power and seven eyes representing knowledge. Both qualities are described as seven to signify their perfection and all-encompassing scope. Just as "all power in heaven and earth" is entrusted to him as the Son of Man, as stated in Scripture (Matthew 28:18), so he possesses complete knowledge of all things in heaven and earth, also as the Son of Man. His knowledge and power extend equally. He is the sun, not only in terms of righteousness but also in terms of knowledge, and nothing is hidden from his penetrating light and beams, which illuminate the darkest recesses of human hearts. He knows the wounds and distresses within their hearts. Just as a round mirror placed in the center of a room reflects all that occurs within it simultaneously, the expanded understanding of Christ's human nature encompasses the affairs of the world he governs, particularly the sufferings of his followers, all at once.

(2.) His human nature possesses knowledge of all things—"I know your deeds, your toil, and your patient endurance" (Revelation 2:2)—

and along with that, an act of memory. He recalls how he himself was once affected and distressed under the same or similar miseries while on earth. The memory of earthly things remains with him, as it does with all spirits in either heaven or hell. In hell, Abraham says to the soul of Dives, "Son, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things" (Luke 16:25). The good thief said to Christ, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). In Revelation 1:18, Christ declares, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive forever and ever." He still remembers his death and the sufferings associated with it. Just as he remembers it to remind his Father, he also remembers it to deeply affect his own heart with what we experience. His memory brings the impression of similar experiences fresh to his mind, reminding him of how it once was with him. Consequently, he comes to know empathetically and experientially how it currently is with us, and he deeply identifies with it. It is akin to the sentiment expressed by Dido in Virgil's Aeneid: "Not ignorant of suffering myself, I learn to relieve the suffering of others." Having experienced similar miseries, even though he is now a king, he knows how to help those who are in them.

Just as God said to the Israelites when they would possess the land of Canaan, "You yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt" (Exodus 23:9), and therefore commanded them to show compassion and treat strangers well based on that understanding, the same can be said of Christ. He knows the hearts of his children in distress, for he himself was once in a similar state. Similarly, the apostle exhorts the Hebrews, "Remember those in prison as if you were bound with them, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering" (Hebrews 13:3), so that before their own deaths, they may come to

experience similar sufferings. Likewise, Christ, the head of the body, which is the source of all senses and feelings in the body, remembers those who are bound and in adversity, having once been in a human body himself. Thus, he compassionately identifies with them based on his own experience. This goes beyond the previous point. We have gained the understanding that Christ not only possesses affections that are genuine and appropriate to human nature, but also affections that are stirred up in him based on his own past experience of similar struggles in a frail nature like ours. This sheds light on how all our miseries are allowed to enter Christ's heart now and deeply impact and move him.

A more detailed exploration is required to understand the nature of this affection, including its seat within Christ's human nature and some important cautions.

II. Regarding this affection itself of pity, compassion, fellow-feeling, and sympathy, which is produced in his heart, there is still another aspect that needs to be examined: what kind of affection is it? It is evident from the text that such an affection is stirred up in him, beyond mere knowledge or remembrance of his own experiences. The apostle tells us that he is not only aware of how he was tempted with similar weaknesses as we are, though that is necessarily assumed, but he is also struck and touched with the feeling of our infirmities. His act of remembrance serves to produce this affection. Moreover, the apostle states that Christ is able and his heart is capable of being so moved. The word "συμπαθῆσαι" signifies to suffer with us until we find relief. It is this affection, once stirred up, that deeply motivates him to help us.

Now, when it comes to understanding the extent and depth of this affection as expressed here, I believe that no person in this life can fully comprehend it. If the heart of a king is inscrutable, as Solomon says, then the heart of the King of kings, now in glory, is even more so. I will not presume to delve into unseen matters, as warned in Colossians 2:18, but I will cautiously and safely speak within the bounds of Scripture and sound reason.

I will present it in three ways: 1. Negatively; 2. Positively; 3. Privatively.

1. Negatively. It is certain that the affection of sympathy or fellow-feeling in Christ is not the same in every aspect as it was during his earthly life. This is evident from what the apostle says about him and his affections during that time. In Hebrews 5:7, it is mentioned, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cryings and tears, was heard in that which he feared." Here, we see that his earthly existence and state of life are distinguished from his current state in heaven as "the days of his flesh." By "flesh," it does not refer to the substance of his human nature, as he still retains that, but rather to the frail quality of being subject to mortality or vulnerability. The term "flesh" is often used in reference to human nature, indicating its susceptibility to fading, wear and decay due to external circumstances or internal emotions. Similarly, in Hebrews 2:14, it is stated, "Forasmuch as the children," referring to us as his brethren, "partake of flesh and blood," meaning the frailties of human nature, "he himself also took part of the same." The apostle further highlights aspects of Christ's earthly life, such as experiencing death and enduring frail passions and affections that caused suffering and

exhaustion of his spirit. Examples include passionate sorrow, accompanied by strong cries and tears, as well as fear, as mentioned in the phrase "He was heard in that which he feared." However, since those days of his earthly existence have passed, as the apostle clarifies by stating it was only in the days of his flesh, such overwhelming and passionate sorrow and fear have ceased. He is no longer capable of experiencing them or being subjected to them. Yet,

2. Positively. Why can't it be affirmed that the same kind of affection of pity and compassion, which was present in his entire being, both body and soul, when he was on earth, still operates in him now that he is in heaven? This position, however, should be tempered with the appropriate cautions and considerations that I will address shortly. If, in essence, the same flesh, blood, and animal spirits remain and serve their purpose, for although Christ, in Luke 24:39, specifically mentioned having flesh and bones after his resurrection when speaking to Thomas and the other disciples, as they were the ones who could physically touch him, it is understood that blood and spirits are also present in that flesh, for it is living flesh, "caro vitalis," and thus contains flowing and moving blood and spirits. Then why not the same affections as well? And not merely stirring in the soul, but also operating in the body, to which the soul is connected, thereby retaining genuinely human affections. The function of blood and spirits is not only to nourish (which is no longer necessary), but also to affect the heart and bowels through their movement back and forth when the soul is affected. And I know not why this function would cease to exist (if not this, then what else?). Similarly, I do not understand why this affection should be limited to his spirit or soul alone, with his corporeal faculties not

participating in them. As he is a true human being and the same person he was before, both in body and soul, for otherwise it would not have been a true resurrection, he still possesses the very same genuine human affections in both. These affections manifest themselves in the body as well as the soul, as the body serves as the seat and instrument for them. Since this entire being, encompassing both body and soul, experienced temptation, and as the text states, he is "touched with a feeling" in that nature which is tempted, it must necessarily involve the entire person, body and soul. Therefore, when we come across references to the "wrath of the Lamb," as in Revelation 6:16, directed against his enemies, just as we encounter mentions of his pity and compassion towards his friends and followers, why should this be attributed solely to his deity, which is incapable of wrath, or solely to his soul and spirit? Couldn't it be considered that he is genuinely angry as a human being, in his entirety, and therefore experiences wrath in his body as well? After all, he has assumed our entire nature precisely to fulfil his divine nature in all its manifestations.

However, the difficulty lies in determining the extent to which we should eliminate the weakness and frailty that characterized such affections during his earthly life, and in distinguishing precisely between the affections Christ had then and those he has in heaven. I can offer little insight into this matter.

Yet, first, we can establish an unquestionable principle, that to the extent and in the sense that his body itself is made spiritual (as it is described in 1 Corinthians 15:44), to that extent, and in that sense, all such affections that work in his body are made spiritual. This is in contrast to the fleshly and frail manner in which they operate here.

However, it should be noted that his body is made spiritual, not a spirit (spiritual in terms of power and resemblance to a spirit, not in terms of substance or nature). Likewise, these affections of pity and compassion do not merely operate in his spirit or soul, but in his body as well, as it serves as their seat and instrument. However, their manner of operation is more spiritual, resembling that of spirits, compared to how they function in a frail, physical body. They are not entirely spiritual in the sense that the soul is their sole subject and draws all their workings into itself. Thus, the difference between his affections now and in the days of his flesh may not lie in that aspect.

It should not be understood as if his body has been transformed into a substance similar to that of the sun, allowing the soul to shine gloriously through it like a glass case. Rather, his body remains united to the soul, to be animated by it, although in an immediate manner, enabling the soul to produce operations within it. The body is called spiritual not because it ceases to be a body, but because it is not the same kind of body. It is structured in such a way that it is completely subject to the soul's arbitrary rule and dominion, functioning according to the soul's pleasure and under its control, just as nimbly and without any hindrance as an angel moves itself or as the soul acts upon itself. One possible difference is that these affections, insofar as they pertain to Christ's body, do not affect his soul as they did here, although they were then under the command of grace and reason to prevent their motions from becoming disorderly or sinful. Furthermore, as the soul is now stronger than these affections, it raises them at its own discretion and stirs them as completely and immediately as it does itself.

Secondly, these affections of pity and sympathy, though they move his bowels and affect his physical heart as they did here, do not

distress or disturb him in the least, nor do they burden or weigh down his spirit, causing him sorrow or heaviness as they did in his earthly life, such as his pity for Lazarus or his distress that made him sorrowful unto death. Thus, in their origin and effect, they are entirely different from what they were in his earthly existence. The reason for this is that his body and its blood and spirits, which are the instruments of affecting him, are now completely impassible. In this sense, they are not capable of any alteration that could cause harm in any way. Therefore, his body does not experience any grief, and his spirits do not undergo waste, decay, or depletion. They may and do serve the soul in its affections, as they did while he was here, but only through local motion, flowing through the veins and arteries to affect the heart and bowels, without the slightest diminishment or harm to themselves or detriment to him. As a result, although this blood and these spirits stir up the same affections in his heart and bowels as they did here, they do so without causing any disturbance or inconvenience to himself. While in his earthly life he was troubled and grieved "without sin" or disorder, now in heaven, when he shows pity and compassion, there is no mixture or hint of disturbance and perturbation that was necessarily present in his affections before due to the frailty of his body and spirits. His perfection does not eliminate his affections, but rather corrects and perfects their imperfections. The best theologians recognize that "perfective passions" still exist in him.

Thirdly, both theologians and other divines acknowledge that all natural affections which do not contain anything inappropriate to the state and condition of glory in which Christ now exists, are present in him. These are human affections that are natural, not tainted with reproach or sin, but completely subject to reason. Furthermore, they are freed from any conditions that may hinder or obstruct either the

mind or the body. There is no reason to believe that such affections cannot coexist with the state of souls in bliss, as Justinian remarks on this matter.

If we consider it, the very state of Christ in glory is such that it is fitting for him to possess human affections of pity and compassion in his entire being, to prompt and inspire him to come to our aid and succor. However, these affections do not make him a man of sorrows in himself again (that would be unbecoming and even incompatible with his nature), but rather a man of succor to us, which is his role. It is important to remember that Christ in heaven should be viewed not only in his personal capacity, as being made happy in his relationship with the Father, but also in his relationships and offices as a head to us. In this relational aspect, he sits there as stated in Ephesians 1:21-22 (and the head is the seat of all senses for the benefit of the body), and thus he is most sensitive in that regard. Therefore, because his members, to whom he bears this relationship, are still under sin and misery, it is not inappropriate for him to have affections that correspond to this relationship in his present state. If his state of glory had been solely intended for his personal happiness, then indeed there would be no need for such affections to remain in him. However, since his relation to us is an integral part of his glory, it is most suitable for him to possess such affections, and it would be unseemly if he did not have them. Moreover, these affections are not a weakness in him when considered in this context, but rather a source of strength, as the apostle refers to them as "dunamis" (power). While these affections might be seen as an imperfection in one respect, namely in relation to his personal state, they are perfection in another respect, particularly in relation to his relationship to us and his role on our behalf. As our head, which he is as a man, it is his glory to genuinely and truly, even as a man,

empathize with all our miseries. In fact, it would be an imperfection if he did not possess such affections.

And fourthly, let me offer this additional comfort: although all the burdensome and harmful affections that weighed on his spirit and affected his body are no longer compatible with him, and though that passionate frailty and weakness that enabled him to pity and provide relief to those in misery, at the cost of suffering himself, has been eliminated, in the current workings of his affections and compassion, which are essentially the same, there is now a greater capacity, vastness, and swiftness. These affections in heaven compensate for the absence of that passionate frailty and effectively spur and motivate him to provide relief for us, just as the previous affections did. It is certain that as his knowledge expanded upon entering into glory, his human affections of love and compassion have also expanded in solidity, strength, and reality, akin to the enduring love of a committed relationship, though perhaps less passionate at first. They are not diminished now, but rather more spiritual. Just as Solomon's heart was as generous and regal in bounty as it was in knowledge, Christ's affections of love are as extensive as his knowledge or power. They share the same breadth and measure. As far as God's intention to show mercy extends (and who can fathom the depths of His riches?), so does Christ's inclination to bestow it. Ephesians 3:19 states, "The love of Christ," both God and man, "surpasses knowledge." His love has not been lost or diminished by his ascension to heaven. Although God, in His nature, may be more merciful than Christ's human nature, the expression and exercise of Christ's affections are as vast as God's purposes and decrees of mercy. All those immense affections and mercies become human mercies, the mercies of a man towards other men.

Regarding the privative aspect, if we say that these affections of Christ's heart are not suffering and afflictive affections, we can still express this of them in terms of lacking a complete fullness of joy and comfort in Christ's heart while he observes us in misery and under infirmities, in comparison to what it will be when we are presented to him free from all such afflictions.

To clarify this, I must bring back, and I will only bring back, the distinction I made (in the fourth demonstration, section 2, part II) of a twofold capacity of glory or a twofold fullness of joy that Christ is destined to have: one that is natural and thus owed to his person as considered in himself alone, and the other additional, arising from the complete happiness and glory of his entire church, of which he is mystically a part. Therefore, in Ephesians 1:23, although he is said to "fill all in all" by virtue of his personal fullness, when he is referred to as the head in relation to his church as his body, as mentioned in the preceding verses, the perfection of the beatitude of this body is reciprocally referred to as his fullness. Thus, until he has filled them with all happiness and freed them from all misery, he himself remains in a state of imperfection, and consequently his affections, which are aligned with this relationship, also possess some degree of imperfection as long as his body endures misery, in comparison to what his heart will experience when they attain this fullness.

We can confidently say that Christ will be more joyful then, and is now, as his children grow beyond their infirmities and as they become more obedient and content in their spirits, as stated in John 15:10-11. I will provide some illustration through this analogy (which, although it may not hold true in all aspects, will give a semblance of it). The spirits of righteous people who have passed away are said to be perfect, as mentioned in Hebrews 12. However, because they have

bodies to which they are related and with which they are destined to be united, they can be considered imperfect in this respect until these bodies are reunited with them and glorified, which will add further fullness to their state. In a similar analogy, this applies to Christ personally and Christ mystically considered. Although Christ in his own person is complete in happiness, in relation to his members he is imperfect, and thus he possesses affections suited to this relationship, which in no way detracts from him. Therefore, the Scripture attributes certain affections to him that carry an inherent imperfection, and these are said to be in him until the day of judgment. Expectation and desire, which are imperfect affections in comparison to the joy found in the complete fulfillment of what was expected or desired, are attributed to him as a man until the day of judgment.

Therefore, in Hebrews 10:12-13, he is said to be seated in heaven, "waiting until his enemies are made his footstool," and the destruction of these enemies will contribute to the evident glory of his kingdom. Just as this will enhance the fullness of his greatness, the complete salvation of his members will add to the completeness of his glory. And just as the expectation of his enemies' downfall can be seen as an imperfect affection in comparison to the triumph he will one day achieve over them, his joy that he currently experiences in his spouse is also imperfect when compared to the joy that will fill his heart on the great day of their union. Accordingly, the Scripture refers to the fulfillment of these desires as satisfaction, as stated in Isaiah 53:11, "He shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied," which implies that there are desires in him that lack the attainment of their ultimate goal. However, we must further consider that Jesus Christ indeed knows and sees the exact time when his fullness, through the exaltation of his members to himself, will be

completed, and when he will triumph over all his enemies and their enemies. He sees their day approaching, as the Psalmist puts it, which mitigates and diminishes to some extent this imperfection of his expectation or delay.

With this doubt resolved, we come to the question of how his heart can be genuinely touched by our sins (our greatest infirmities) since he was tempted without sin.

III. There remains a significant concern to be addressed, which naturally arises in every good-hearted individual. You have mentioned, they may say, that by "infirmities" sins are meant, and that the apostle's intention was to encourage us against them as well, for they are indeed the greatest sources of discomfort and discouragement. However, in regard to these sins, what the apostle states here provides us with little consolation, as Christ cannot truly empathise with us in that regard, for "he knew no sin." Yes, the apostle himself makes an exception here, saying, "He was tempted in all things, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). It may indeed bring comfort to us that Christ does and will have compassion for us in all other weaknesses, since he himself was subjected to similar experiences. However, he never knew what it was like to be under the power of sin and tormented by lust, as I am. How then can I find solace in what the apostle says about him here? I will endeavour to provide some satisfaction and relief in this matter through the following considerations.

Firstly, as the apostle has stated, "he was tempted, yet without sin." It was essential for him to be without sin in order to be a suitable priest to save us. As Hebrews 7:26 says, "Such a High Priest was fitting for us, holy and separate from sinners." However, for your

further comfort, consider that he came as close as possible in that aspect. The text says, "He was tempted in all things," although he remained "without sin" on his part. Yet he was tempted to every kind of sin to the extent of experiencing affliction in those temptations, understanding the misery of those who are tempted, and knowing how to have compassion for them in all such temptations. Just as in taking on our nature through his birth, he came as close as possible without being tainted by original sin, namely, by taking the very same matter to form his body as that from which all of ours are made, he also allowed himself to be tempted as far as possible in terms of actual sin, while keeping himself pure. He permitted all sorts of experiments to be conducted on him by Satan, similar to how a person who has taken a strong antidote allows a mountebank to try different treatments on them. And indeed, because he was tempted by Satan in relation to sin, it is explicitly added, "yet without sin," as if to say that sin never stained him, even though he was outwardly tempted by it. He was tempted with all kinds of sins by Satan, as those three temptations in the wilderness encompassed various types of temptations, as explained by interpreters of the Gospels.

Secondly, in order to be able to empathise with us in the face of sin, he was more distressed by the filth and power of sin in others with whom he interacted than any of us are by sin within ourselves. His "righteous soul was vexed" by it, just as Lot's righteous soul was troubled by the impure conduct of the people of Sodom. He "endured the contradiction of sinners against himself" (Hebrews 12:3). As it is written, "The insults of those who insult you," referring to his God, "have fallen on me" (Romans 15:3). This passage from the Psalms speaks of Christ and is quoted by the apostle, signifying that every sin pained his heart. The only difference between him and us in this regard is that the regenerate part within us is troubled by sin in

ourselves, as our own sin, whereas his heart was troubled by sin in others only. However, his distress was greater because his soul was more righteous than ours, which compensates for this difference. Moreover, as he represented the elect, the sins he witnessed them commit troubled him as if they were his own. Some interpreters read the word translated as "tempted" here as "vexed."

Moreover, thirdly, to further address this issue, it can be said of Christ while he was on earth that in the same sense or manner in which he "bore our sickness" (Matthew 8:17), even though he was never personally afflicted with any disease, he may also be said to have borne our sins. This means that when Christ came to one of his chosen children who was sick and whom he healed, his approach was characterized by sympathy and compassion, as if he himself were afflicted with their sickness. For example, when he raised Lazarus, it is mentioned that he "groaned in spirit." By taking upon himself the disease and experiencing a fellow-feeling with it, he removed it from them, enduring affliction on their behalf as if he himself had been sick. This interpretation appears to be the most fitting explanation for the challenging passage in Matthew 8:16-17, where it states that "he healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'He himself took our infirmities and bore our sickness.'"

Likewise, in a similar manner, he could bear our sins too, for he was united with us and accountable for all our sins. Therefore, when he witnessed any of his own committing sin, he was affected by it as if it were his own. This completes and satisfies the concept of the power of sin.

Fourthly, in terms of the guilt of sin and the temptations that arise from it, he possesses a deeper understanding than any one of us. He tasted the bitterness of sin through its imputation more profoundly than we can comprehend, as well as the cup of his Father's wrath for it. Thus, he is able to empathise experientially with a heart wounded by guilt and struggling under such temptations. He truly understands the anguish of feeling forsaken by God, for he himself experienced it when he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

Uses of all.

Use 1. Thus, what has been said can provide us with the strongest consolation and encouragement against our sins, surpassing any other consideration. It assures us with the utmost certainty that our sins will be removed from us. This is because:

Firstly, Christ himself suffers, or at least is affected by them, as his enemies, which is why he will undoubtedly remove them for the sake of his own peace. His heart would not be at peace if he did not know that they would be eradicated. As God says in the prophet, Christ can say even more, "My heart is troubled for him, I will surely remember him" (Jeremiah 31:20).

Secondly, there is comfort in the fact that your very sins move him to pity more than to anger. This text clearly supports it, as he suffers with us under our weaknesses, and by weaknesses, it means sins as well as other miseries, as has been demonstrated. Therefore, when you view them as weaknesses, just as God here views and speaks of them in his own, and when you consider them as your affliction, and you complain to Christ about them, crying out, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me?" (Romans 7:24), then do not fear for

long. Christ stands by your side, and instead of being provoked against you, all his anger is directed towards your sin to destroy it. Indeed, his compassion towards you increases even more. It is akin to the heart of a father towards a child who has a loathsome disease, or as one feels towards a limb of their body afflicted with leprosy. He does not hate the limb, for it is a part of his own flesh, but he despises the disease, and that provokes him to show even more pity towards the affected part. How could it not be in our favour when our sins, which are against both Christ and ourselves, become reasons for him to show even greater compassion? The object of pity is someone in misery whom we love, and the greater the misery, the more intense the pity, especially when the person is beloved. Now, of all miseries, sin is the greatest, and as long as you see it as such, Christ will only view it as such within you. He loves you as individuals and hates only the sin. Thus, his hatred will be directed solely towards the sin, to free you from it through its destruction, while his compassion will be extended towards you even more. This applies to when you are under the grip of sin just as it does under any other affliction. Therefore, do not fear, for "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Romans 8:35).

Use 2. Regardless of the trials, temptations, or miseries we face, we can find comfort in the fact that Christ was once in the same situation or something similar. This brings comfort in three different ways:

Firstly, it means that we are simply following his example, for he was tempted in every way, and this can be a significant source of comfort for us.

Secondly, we can look to those specific instances where Christ experienced similar situations as a meritorious cause for obtaining assistance and support from him now. In this regard, we can find further comfort.

Thirdly, his past experience of bearing similar hardships can bring relief, as it means he truly understands the misery and distress of such conditions. This understanding further motivates and encourages him to help us.

Use 3. As the teachings provided bring comfort, they also serve as the greatest motivation against sin and as a persuasive force towards obedience. We must consider that if our hearts afflict Christ—and we cannot fully comprehend the extent of his suffering—it is certain that he will find less joy in us when we are more sinful or disobedient. You are unaware of the impact your sins have on the heart of Christ. Even if the only consequence is a decrease in his joy towards you, it should move you, as it does those who possess genuine integrity. Let this serve as an incentive for obedience: if he continues to hold the same heart and disposition of mercy towards you as he did on earth, then in response to his love, strive to have the same heart towards him on earth as you hope to have in heaven. As you pray daily, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10), let this be a reminder.

Use 4. In all your miseries and distresses, you can be certain that you have a friend in heaven who will help and pity you – Christ. His nature, role, interests, and relationship all compel him to come to your aid. You may find that even friends, at times, are unreasonable and closed off to your needs. In those moments, remember that there is one who will show you compassion – someone in heaven whose

heart is moved by your every weakness. Go and pour out your sorrows to him. Say to them all, if you refuse to show me pity, I know someone who will. I have a friend in heaven whose heart is touched by all my infirmities, and I will go and share my troubles with him. Approach him boldly, as the text says, with open expression, laying bare your complaints. In doing so, you will find grace and mercy to help you in your time of need. People appreciate being pitied by friends, even if those friends cannot offer assistance. But Christ can and will do both – he will extend his pity and provide the help you require.

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ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions August 2023. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn,

OR 97068